

Reflection on the Future Development of Education

AN ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN INDIA

AND LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

by J. P. Naik

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This abridged paper is presented in connection with the Unesco programme activity entitled "Reflection on the Future Development of Education", which aims to explore prospects for the development of education over the next two decades and to outline priorities for international cooperation in education.

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Selective Glossary of Indian terms used in the text*

Balwadi is a child day-care centre or nursery.

Centre, or Central Government, refers to the highest level of government under India's federal system, which comprises several States and Union Territories.

Concurrent list refers to a list of powers and areas of responsibility, spelled out in the Indian Constitution, which are shared by the Central and State Governments; education in India is a State responsibility, so is not included on the concurrent list.

Crore is a term of magnitude equivalent to ten million (10,000,000).

Dyarchy is a system introduced by the British in India according to which power was exercised by two sets of authorities, one Indian and the other British.

Karma is a metaphysical concept, found particularly in Hinduism and Buddhism, which refers to a person's quality or destiny, as determined by the sum of his or her prior actions, notably during prior states of being (incarnations).

Lakh is a term of magnitude equivalent to one hundred thousand (100,000).

Panchayat is a local or village council.

Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are castes and tribes listed in a schedule to the Indian Constitution and according to which are officially recognized as deserving special consideration due to their unfavourable position in Indian society at the moment of independence.

Shri is an honorific title before a man's name, frequently used in place of Mister.

Swadeshi is a term meaning "of the homeland".

Union is a term which refers to the totality of the Indian political system, the federal entity; it is sometimes used interchangeably with Centre to refer to the Central Government.

Union Territory is a political entity at the sub-federal level, roughly equivalent to a State, but not having full State prerogatives and hence subject to Central (Union) control.

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Summary

(In 1964 the Government of India appointed an Education Commission to look into all aspects of education and to formulate proposals for developing a truly national system of education. The Commission presented its report in 1966. After considerable debate on the report, the government issued a "Statement of National Policy on Education" in 1968, which drew inspiration from the Commission's report, but did not incorporate all of the Commission's proposals. The Statement was intended to serve as the general policy framework for the subsequent development of education in India.)

The author of the present paper served as the member-secretary of the Education Commission and thus has an intimate knowledge of the Commission's work. He reviews here the principal findings and recommendations of the Commission, evaluates their implementation and impact, and draws conclusions for the guidance of further efforts at planning the future development of education in India. This paper thus presents a rare retrospective study of an attempt at a major educational reform and provides insights, based on this experience, into the process of reform and the conditions for its success. It also presents a thorough discussion of several problems confronting educators and planners in India, as well as in other developing countries.

After reviewing briefly the historical background of the Education Commission's work, the author discusses the Commission's findings and recommendations under three broad headings according to their intended impact on the education system and the priority accorded by the Commission : transformation, qualitative improvement, and expansion. This priority ranking is exactly the opposite of the policy and practice evident in India up to the time of the Commission. The central focus of the Commission's work was the establishment of a "national system of education", which must be understood within the context of India's long struggle for independence, its pluralistic society and federal system of government, according to which the individual states, not the central government, are responsible for education.

The Commission's report presented a comprehensive package of measures to bring about a much-needed "educational revolution", but its recommendations were discussed instead on an item-by-item basis ; some were ultimately accepted, while others were rejected or ignored. In fact one issue dominated the public debate : the language of instruction -- a highly emotional and political issue in a multilingual society. Relatively few of the Commission's proposals survived the public debate and were incorporated into the government's "Statement of National Policy on Education" of 1968. Of these, the author finds that the record of implementation over the subsequent ten years has been generally disappointing and that there is a "continuing educational crisis" (chapter five).

In the final chapter, the author attempts to draw lessons for the future based on India's experience with implementing its national policy on education and on further guidance yet to be found in the Education Commission's report. He calls for a renewed effort and commitment on the part of educators, students and central and state authorities, as well as of politicians and the general public, to work out and carry through a thorough educational and social reform to eliminate the worst evils of present Indian society : the continuance of elitism, hierarchial organization, and poverty. He then outlines a "revised blue-print" for a national system of education, which would entail the construction of a new, more flexible educational structure, suitable for and oriented to education of the people, rather than of the elite.

RESUME

En 1964, le Gouvernement de l'Inde nomma une Commission pour l'Education chargée d'examiner l'ensemble des aspects éducatifs et de formuler des propositions en vue de développer un véritable système national d'éducation. La Commission présenta son rapport en 1966. Celui-ci fut l'objet de nombreux débats à la suite desquels le Gouvernement élaborait, en 1968, un "Exposé de politique nationale en matière d'éducation" qui s'inspirait du rapport de la Commission mais ne contenait cependant pas toutes ses propositions. Cet exposé était destiné à servir de cadre général à la politique en vue du développement futur de l'éducation en Inde.

L'auteur de la présente étude ayant lui-même fait partie de la Commission en tant que "membre-secrétaire", possède de ce fait une connaissance approfondie des travaux qu'elle a menés. Il passe en revue les principales conclusions et recommandations de la Commission, fait une évaluation de leur application et de leur portée et tire des conclusions en vue d'orienter les efforts vers une planification appropriée du développement futur de l'éducation en Inde. Ainsi, cette étude offre-t-elle une rare analyse rétrospective d'une tentative de réforme en profondeur de l'éducation et fournit-elle un intéressant aperçu, à la lumière de cette expérience, du processus de réforme et des conditions propres à assurer son succès. Ce papier présente également une étude approfondie des divers problèmes qui opposent éducateurs et planificateurs en Inde ainsi que dans d'autres pays en développement.

Après avoir fait un bref historique des travaux de la Commission pour l'Education, l'auteur étudie les conclusions et recommandations groupées sous trois thèmes principaux suivant leur portée présumée sur le système éducatif et la priorité qui leur a été accordée par la Commission : transformation, amélioration qualitative et expansion. Cet ordre de priorité est exactement à l'opposé de la politique pratiquée en Inde jusqu'à l'établissement de la Commission. Le point central vers lequel ont convergé les travaux de la Commission a été l'instauration d'un "système d'éducation national" devant être conçu dans le contexte de la longue lutte livrée par l'Inde pour son indépendance, de sa société pluraliste et d'un système gouvernemental fédéral selon lequel l'éducation doit être la responsabilité de chaque Etat et non du Gouvernement central.

Dans son rapport, la Commission présenta un ensemble complet de mesures destinées à provoquer une "révolution éducative" certes indispensable, mais ses recommandations, au lieu de faire l'objet d'un examen d'ensemble, furent discutées une par une; certaines furent acceptées en dernier ressort, alors que d'autres étaient rejetées ou simplement ignorées. En fait, un problème domina le débat : la langue d'enseignement : problème suscitant l'émotion et les passions politiques dans une société multilingue. Finalement, après le débat public, un nombre restreint de propositions émises par la Commission furent retenues pour figurer dans "l'Exposé de politique nationale en matière d'éducation" présenté par le Gouvernement en 1968. L'auteur conclut que l'inventaire des progrès réalisés dans le domaine éducatif au cours des dix années qui ont suivi l'exposé est dans l'ensemble assez décevant et qu'il existe une "crise permanente de l'éducation" (chapitre V).

Au chapitre final, l'auteur s'efforce de tirer des leçons pour l'avenir à la lumière de l'expérience indienne dans sa tentative d'élaboration d'une politique nationale d'éducation et insiste sur les orientations utiles que peut encore fournir le rapport de la Commission pour l'Education. Il souligne la nécessité d'un effort renouvelé et d'un engagement accru de la part des éducateurs, des étudiants, des autorités centrales et de celles des Etats, des hommes politiques et du grand public pour permettre d'élaborer et d'appliquer une réforme profonde de l'éducation en même temps qu'une réforme sociale visant à éliminer les maux fléaux de la société indienne actuelle, à savoir : la persistance de l'élitisme, l'organisation hiérarchique et la pauvreté. L'auteur esquisse enfin un "projet révisé" de système national d'éducation qui permettrait la mise en place d'une structure de l'éducation plus flexible, mieux adaptée et orientée vers l'éducation du peuple, plutôt que vers celle d'une élite.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EDUCATION COMMISSION

The Education Commission (1964-66) was unique in several respects and had a number of special features. Of these, two deserve special notice here : (1) its comprehensive approach to educational reconstruction and (2) its attempt to project a blue-print of a national system of education for India.

Comprehensive approach

It may be recalled that the Education Commission (1964-66) was the sixth commission appointed by the Government of India. The first was the Indian Education Commission (1882), which dealt mainly with school education. It reviewed the progress of education in the country since the Education Despatch of 1854 and laid down broad guidelines of policy for the development of education over the next two decades. The second was the Indian Universities Commission (1902), which reviewed the development of higher education since the establishment of the first three universities at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1857 and made recommendations for the reorganization of India universities. The third was the Calcutta University Commission (1947-49), which reviewed the development of secondary and higher education in Bengal and made suggestions for the reorganization of the Calcutta University and the establishment of a new university at Dacca. The fourth Commission, and the first to be appointed in the post-independence period, was the University Education Commission (1948-49), which reviewed the past development of higher education in the country and made proposals for its future expansion and improvement. A similar function for secondary education was performed by the Secondary Education Commission (1952), which was the fifth in the series.

It will thus be seen that the policy, whether in the pre-independence period or later, was to look at education in a compartmentalized fashion and that no commission had ever been appointed for primary and adult education. A strong demand was being made in the late fifties and early sixties that the Government of India should appoint an Education Commission to look at education as a whole, including primary and adult education. It was in response to this demand that the Central Government appointed the Education Commission (1964-66) at the initiative of Shri M.C. Chagla, the Minister of Education at the Centre, and entrusted it with the task of looking at the entire spectrum of education, except medical and legal education. This was, therefore, the first commission in our educational history to look comprehensively at almost all aspects of education.

The search for a national system of education

The second aspect of the Education Commission (1964-66) is of even greater significance, viz., it was the first commission to be charged with the responsibility for suggesting how a national system of education should be created. As is well known to the students of Indian educational history, dissatisfaction with the modern educational system created by the British administrators began to grow towards the close of the nineteenth century, and a strong demand for the creation of a national system of education was put forward as an integral part of the national struggle for freedom. For instance, a resolution of the Indian National Congress, adopted in 1906, said that the time had arrived "for the people all over the country earnestly to take up the question of national education for boys and girls, and organize a system of education, literary, scientific and technical, suited to the requirements of the country, on national lines,

and under national control, and directed towards the realization of the national destiny". This search for a national system of education took two distinct forms in the pre-independence period : (1) to attempt a conceptual clarification of the objectives, content, organization and other related aspects of the national education system ; and (2) to try out some experiments outside the official system based on this vision of national education.

(1) Basic concepts of national education : The first attempt to define national education led to a nation-wide and sustained debate which threw up, by 1947, the following main concepts on the subject :

- (a) The British looked upon India, not as a great country with an independent status of its own, but as a satellite of England whose main function was to supply raw materials to British industry and to buy its finished products. The broad objective of the official efforts was, therefore, to create an educational system in India which would, by and large, be a pale imitation of that in England. The nationalist view, on the contrary, was that our efforts should be directed to create not a lesser England, but a greater India, and that we would evolve a national system of education based on our own traditions and suited to the life, needs and aspirations of our people. This was neither a chauvinist nor a revivalist posture. It merely implied, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, that while we welcome breezes from all corners of the world to blow into our house, we would not like to be blown off our feet by any.
- (b) The national system of education should emphasize education of the people, i.e. liquidation of illiteracy and universalization of elementary education. Dadabhai Naoroji pleaded before the Indian Education Commission (1882) that steps should be taken to provide primary education to all children. Gokhale moved a resolution and a bill to the same effect in the Central Legislature (1910-12), but his efforts did not succeed. Mahatma Gandhi was even more categorical and emphatic : he desired every child to receive compulsory education of seven years whose content would be equal to that of the matriculation minus English plus a craft.
- (c) The over-dominant, imperialist position of the English language should go. While it will continue to be studied for its academic value of providing direct access to the growing knowledge in the world, it should be replaced by the regional languages in the transaction of official business, in the courts, and as medium of instruction at all stages of education. Moreover, Hindi (or Hindustani) should be developed as a link language for all-India purposes and should also be used as the official language of the Union.
- (d) The alienation that arises between the individuals educated in the modern educational system and the masses of the people should be eliminated by the adoption of several measures. For instance, as Mahatma Gandhi advocated in the scheme of basic education, socially useful productive work should be made the centre of the educational process to inculcate the dignity of manual labour. It is our common experience that the modern system of education creates two distinct social groups : (1) the educated persons, who refuse to work with their hands and who live a parasitic life, and (2) the masses, who work with their hands and produce wealth but are deprived of all opportunities of formal education. The national system of education should produce individuals who would avoid this dichotomy between work and education and should train all individuals to be educated, productive workers.

- (e) Science education and education for technology should be emphasized for purposes of modernization and removal of poverty.
- (f) Education should inculcate a spirit of patriotism and a sense of proper pride in our cultural heritage. It should also instil an urge to build the greater India of our dreams and to wage a relentless war against the evils of poverty, inequality, ignorance and ill-health that afflict our society.
- (g) Moral and aesthetic education should receive adequate emphasis.

In order to work out these and other concepts into a regular system of national education, the National Planning Committee created by the Indian National Congress in 1938 and chaired by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru appointed two sub-committees, but their work could not be pursued satisfactorily due to disturbed political conditions, and no specific plans of a national education system emerged. (In the meantime, the British Government of India produced its own official version of a national system of education under the title Post-War Educational Development in India (1944-84)). The main objective of this programme was to create in India, by 1984, a system of education which would be somewhat comparable to that in England in 1939. It proposed liquidation of illiteracy in a period of 25 years, the provision of universal basic education for all children in the age-group 6-14, a highly selective system of secondary and higher education, and a limited provision for technical and vocational education -- all at an estimated cost of Rs.2,500 million or so per annum. However, the people rejected the plan outright, partly because of its narrow objectives, partly for the long time involved, and partly because of its highly selective (and therefore unacceptable) approach to all post-elementary education. In spite of the national pre-occupations with the concept for over four decades, the country thus did not have any accepted plan for a national system of education even in 1947 when it became free.

(2) Experiments in national education : The second attempt to define national education during the pre-independence period was to establish pilot institutions to gain experience and train workers. The present Jadavpur university arose out of one such early attempt. The educational institutions set up by Rabindranath Tagore -- Sriniketan, Shantiniketan and Vishwabharati -- belonged to the same category of institutions of national education and had distinctive features of their own. The movement progressed slowly at first but got a great fillip at the time of the non-cooperation movement (1921), when thousands of students left schools and colleges and had to be provided with some alternative forms of education. It was at this time that institutions like the Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Kashi Vidyapeeth, and Jamia Millia Islamia, were founded. They refused to receive aid from government and maintained themselves partly through public contributions but mainly through the sacrifice of their few dedicated workers. They did not become popular because of the lack of official support and were not able to evolve high academic standards, but they played the significant role of keeping the torch burning through the difficult days of foreign rule and trained a large number of individuals who provided leadership in the struggle for freedom.

Appointment of the Commission

In 1947, when the country achieved independence, there was no accepted plan of a national system of education, and the institutions of national education evolved earlier formed only a microscopic minority. Three definite steps were expected from the national government that now came to power : (1) it would take immediate steps to prepare a blue-print of a national system of education ; (2) it would extend financial support to the institutions of national education and enable them to make an impact on the education system as a whole ; and (3) it would transform the entire educational system so that all educational institutions become national schools. Unfortunately, the first was never attempted and, as stated earlier, the Central Government continued to look at education in a fragmentary fashion and appointed only a Commission for university education and later for secondary education.

The second step was the easiest to do, and most institutions of national education were now assisted financially and brought within the official system. Contrary to expectations, however, they became the weaker rather than the stronger elements of the formal system and were therefore unable to exert any effective reforming influence on the system as a whole. Similarly, the central and the state governments made little effort to transform the existing educational system on the basis of the concepts of national education developed earlier and contented themselves merely by securing its linear expansion.

Quite obviously, these policies came in for increasing criticism, and a demand began to be put forward that government should take early steps to prepare a blue-print of a national system of education and then put it on the ground in a carefully prepared and time-bound programme. It was really this aspect of the demand that was mainly responsible for the appointment of the Education Commission (1964-66). Its terms of reference requested it "to advise government on the national pattern of education and on the general principles and policies for the development of education at all stages and in all its aspects". The Commission must thus be seen as the end result of a persistent search for a national system of education, spread over nearly sixty years, and the success or otherwise of its efforts should also be judged mainly with reference to this aspect of its assignment.

The follow-up

For the last twelve years, the report of the Education Commission (1964-66) has been on the anvil. The Government of India circulated it to the State Governments and the universities and held extensive discussions thereon in all parts of the country and with a large variety of interested groups. The report was also examined by a committee of Members of Parliament, and historically, it may be said that this is the only report to have had this distinction. The report was also discussed extensively in both Houses of Parliament. In the light of all these discussions, the Government of India issued a "Statement on the National Policy on Education" in 1968. This has now been revised in 1979. The educational policies and programmes adopted in the Fourth (1968-73), Fifth (1973-78), and Sixth (1978-83) Five-Year Plans are broadly based on the recommendations of the Education Commission as modified by the two "Statements on the National Policy on Education".

Objectives of this study

The Education Commission had prepared a blue-print of educational development in India spread over 20 years (1966-86). This was broadly divided into two sub-periods of ten years each : 1966-76 and 1976-86. The actual educational developments in the country between 1966-76 show marked variations with those postulated by the Commission for the same period. There could be several explanations for this : the recommendations of the Education Commission itself were either inadequate or unsound ; even if the recommendations were sound, they were often ignored, sometimes rejected outright for one reason or another, and often modified in such a manner as to make them almost useless ; and even if some sound recommendations were accepted, they were implemented only imperfectly in practice. Some of the recommendations of the Education Commission have also become outdated by sheer lapse of time and the inevitable rapid changes that take place in the modern society. At any rate, it would be worthwhile to review the report of the Education Commission, the attempts made to implement its recommendations, and the results obtained, both positive and negative. Such an evaluative study would be of immense use in the preparation of revised plans for the development of education in the country over the next two decades (1981-2000).

It was from this point of view that the Indian Institute of Education decided in 1976, within the context of its research project "the Development of Education in India (1981-2000)", to undertake this examination of the report of the Education Commission (1964-66) and the attempts to implement its recommendations over the subsequent twelve years (1966-78). The examination was expected to address the following questions :

- (1) What was the national system of education recommended by the Education Commission (1964-66) ? How far is this blue-print right and accepted by the nation ?
- (2) What efforts were made, in the last ten years or so, to implement the proposals made by the Commission ? To what extent did these efforts succeed or fail and why ?
- (3) What inference can be drawn from this experience for the future development of education in India, say, between 1981 and 2000 ?

The issues will be discussed seriatim in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER TWO

A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

As a first step in our discussion, we shall try to describe briefly the model of the national system of education recommended by the Education Commission (1964-66). It is all the more necessary to do so because the essential features of the model are not always clearly grasped, due mainly to the length of the report and the large number of details it examines.

Basic assumptions

Quite obviously, a model of a national system of education is based on a number of tacit assumptions of which three are most significant : (1) the type of future society one has in view ; (2) the type of educational system one visualizes ; and (3) the relationship between society and education which one postulates. On each of these, the Education Commission took an unique position.

(1) The future society : The Commission had a certain vision of the India of tomorrow and of national development, viz., it looked forward to the creation of a democratic, secular and egalitarian society which would be based on science and spiritual values and wherein the evils of poverty, ignorance and ill health would be eliminated through the humane use of scientific and technical knowledge.

The Commission's plea for science was based on material and cultural grounds. On the material side, the Commission observed : "The one great lesson of the present age of science is that, with determination and the willingness to put in hard work, prosperity is within the reach of any nation which has a stable and progressive government" (para. 1.83). The Commission therefore felt that science and technology would help in relating education to productivity, in making better use of all available material and human resources, and in providing more food, more education, better health and a reasonable standard of living for all. Science also has an important cultural role. The Commission pointed out that it "strengthens the commitment of man to free enquiry and to the quest for truth as his highest duty and obligation. It loosens the bonds of dogmatism and acts as a powerful dispeller of fear and superstition, fatalism and passive resignation. By its emphasis on reason and free enquiry, it even helps to lessen ideological tensions which often arise because of adherence to dogma and fanaticism" (para. 1.24). The Commission wanted a scientific outlook to become "a part of our way of life and culture" (para 1.23).

While agreeing that India should draw upon the great stock of scientific and technological knowledge accumulated by the western world over the last two hundred years, the Commission emphasized that it was essential for her to develop an indigenous research capability so that she participates in the world intellectual community, not "from the periphery, or as a reproducer or a marginal contributor to what has been discovered or invented elsewhere", but "as an equal in a process of creating, giving and receiving" (para 11.24).

Recognizing that technology can be put to extremely perverted uses and that a humane use of scientific and technological knowledge is crucial to development, the Commission laid great stress on the policy that India should learn to "harness" science and not be "dominated" by it. This would be possible, said the Commission, if she remembered "her great tradition of duty without self-involvement, unacquisitive temperament, tolerance and innate love of peace and reverence for all things" and developed "a new pride and a deeper faith" in it (para. 1.83). The creation of such an age of "science and spirituality", the Commission opined, could be a major contribution of India to the development of man.

The Commission laid an equal stress on national and social integration, which implied the creation of an egalitarian, cohesive and integrated society based on a democratic way of life. "The population of India consists of persons who profess different religions, speak different languages, belong to different races, castes, classes and communities. It is precisely in such a situation that democracy can make its most significant contribution. A healthy development of democratic trends will help to soften the impact of this division into social, economic and cultural groups. The task is admittedly difficult ; but it can convert the differences of language, cultural pattern, religion, etc. into the warp and woof of a very rich and rewarding social and cultural life. The problem of national integration is essentially one of harmonizing such differences, of enabling different elements of the population to live peacefully and cooperatively and to utilize their varied gifts for the enrichment of the national life as a whole". (para. 1.68).

It should be emphasized that the Commission saw no contradiction between our commitment to science and secularism (which is inescapable in a democratic society having a plurality of religions), on the one hand, and to religion and spiritual values, on the other. It held the view that all these converged to enrich human life as a whole. It observed, for instance, that "a vitalized study of science with its emphasis on open-mindedness, tolerance, and objectivity would inevitably lead to the development of a more secular outlook, in the sense in which we use the word, amongst those who profess different religions. This process needs to be carefully and wisely encouraged" (para. 1.80). Similarly, the highest pursuits of science seem to get continually closer to those of religion and to enrich one another so that science can help to "secularize" religion just as religion may help to "spiritualize" science. In the same way, "the walls between the secular and the spiritual are tending to break down and what is secular is seen to have to have spiritual roots" (para. 1.80). The Commission therefore recommended that "India should strive to bring science and the values of the spirit together and in harmony, and thereby pave the way for the eventual emergence of a society which would cater to the needs of the whole man and not only to a particular fragment of his personality" (para. 1.80).

While the Commission was thus both clear and emphatic about the scientific, technological and spiritual aspects of the problem, it did not show the same awareness about the social, economic and political transformation that is needed to create the new society visualized in the Preamble to the Constitution, viz., a social order based on the values of freedom, justice, equality and dignity of the individual. For this transformation to take place, the proper development of science and technology, which places man in an appropriate relationship with nature, and of spiritual values, which place man in an appropriate relationship with himself, are both essential but not sufficient. It is also necessary to evolve a proper scheme of

social, economic and political processes and structures which would place man in an appropriate relationship with society and with the other individuals in it. Unfortunately, this aspect of the problem was not stressed in the report of the Commission, and this omission, as subsequent discussions and developments have shown, has been one of the major weaknesses of the theoretical formulation of the problem as made by the Commission.

(2) The new education : If this is the new society we desire to create, and if education has to be a powerful instrument for the creation of this society, it goes without saying that the national system of education

- should be based on a deep and widespread study of science and technology ;
- should cultivate a capacity and willingness to work hard and be closely related to productivity ;
- should strengthen social and national integration and help to create a more just and egalitarian social order ;
- should consolidate democracy as a form of government and help us to adopt it as a way of life ; and
- should strive to build character by cultivating social, moral and spiritual values.

The Commission was of the view that the existing system of education, which was basically designed "to meet the needs of an imperial administration within the limitations set by a feudal and traditional society" (para. 1.17), would not be able to help the country to realize its aspirations and that it needed "radical changes" if it was to meet the purposes of a modern, democratic and socialist society : "changes in objectives, in content, in teaching methods, in programmes, in the size and composition of the student body, in the selection and professional preparation of teachers and in organization" (para. 1.17). The Commission described this as the "educational revolution" needed to create a national system of education. It was on the details of this revolution that the report of the Education Commission concentrated its attention, and rightly so.

(3) Relationship between educational and social transformation :

The Commission believed that education was a major instrument for peaceful economic, social and political transformation. Of course, it qualified this statement by saying that education was a double-edged tool : while wrong education could lead to social disintegration, the right kind of education could bring about effective national development. It also asserted that, if the existing educational system could be replaced by an appropriate national system of education, the socio-economic and political revolution we needed would also be automatically triggered off. Even while agreeing therefore that "educational and national development are intimately inter-related and that it may not be possible to make much headway in education unless the basic problems of life are also squarely faced and resolutely tackled", it still advocated the view that perhaps the "most effective way of breaking the vicious circle in which we find ourselves at present is to begin educational reconstruction in a big way" (para. 19.50). That is why it placed the highest emphasis on the creation of a national system of education through an educational revolution (para. 1.17). It also believed that the national system of education of the type visualized by it could be created even within the existing social, economic and political structure if the Central and State Governments provided the necessary political and financial support and if the teachers, students

and educational administrators also provided the needed academic leadership. Of course, these assumptions have come in for considerable criticism and will certainly need modifications if future attempts at educational reform are to fare better. All the same, it is necessary to state these assumptions categorically at the very outset because it is only against their background that the recommendations of the Commission can be understood and properly evaluated.

Three types of recommendations

With these introductory observations, let us turn to the main recommendations of the Commission which can be divided into three broad categories :

- (1) Recommendations whose primary objective is to bring about a transformation of the existing educational system ;
- (2) Recommendations which are essentially meant to improve standards and quality ; and
- (3) Recommendations which are essentially meant to expand educational services.

There is nothing new in this classification adopted by the Commission, although several of its proposals under each category were original and far-reaching.

Transformation

The Commission recommended that the following programmes should be developed mainly with a view to bringing about a transformation of the educational system :

(1) Education of the people, i.e. universal elementary education and adult education, including liquidation of adult illiteracy. These are often regarded as programmes of expansion which they undoubtedly are, but their impact is so fundamental and far reaching that they really deserve to be regarded as programmes of transformation. Our educational system has been geared to the welfare of the upper and middle classes right from the start, and they continue to be its principal beneficiaries even to this date. Education has thus become an instrument for the preservation of status and continuation of privilege. The programmes of universal elementary education and liquidation of illiteracy will make a radical change in this situation : they will orient our educational system to the masses instead of to the privileged classes and thus unleash new social and political forces which will help the people to come into their own. In fact it would be proper, as we have done here, to accord them a very high priority even among the programmes of educational transformation.

(2) Work-experience and social or national service : The Commission recommended that these should become integral parts of education at all stages. At present, education gets tied up with leisure and culture which, in their turn, are tied up with privilege - social, economic or political. The educated individuals, who form a small privileged minority, do not like to work with their hands and live a parasitic life based on the exploitation of the masses. The vast bulk of the people, on the other hand, are workers and producers of wealth, but they do not get any benefit from the educational system, have little leisure and hardly any access to cultural institutions. The entire society thus gets divided into two groups : (1) an educated, leisured and parasitic small class of the haves and (2) large masses of workers who are deprived of education and most other good things of life.

The Commission desired to abolish this dichotomy between work and education and enable the products of the educational system to be good workers, as well as educated and cultured individuals, by making work-experience and social and national service integral parts of education at all stages.

(3) Emphasis on science education and research : The Commission emphasized the teaching of science and mathematics compulsorily to all students at the school stage in order to create a scientific temper in the society as a whole and highlighted the need to improve the quality of science teaching. Science would be an optional subject beyond class ten, but the emphasis on improving the quality of its teaching should continue. Scientific research should be emphasized at the university stage, related closely to problems of development, and increasingly supported with a view to creating an indigenous capability of high level and a large degree of self-reliance.

(4) Relating education to productivity : The Commission recommended that education should be related to productivity so that a positive correlation would be established between the expansion of education and economic growth. This could be done through inculcating the dignity of manual labour, promotion of scientific research and technology, creating a work ethic in the society as a whole, vocationalization of secondary education, on-the-job training for workers, and promotion of education for agriculture and industry.

(5) Emphasis on character formation : The educational system should emphasize character formation through the inculcation of values. Education is essentially a three-fold process of giving information, developing skills and inculcating values. In the existing system, the first of these is over-emphasized, the second gets meagre attention, and the third is neglected almost totally. In the national system of education, this imbalance should be done away with and much greater stress should be laid on the development of skills and character formation.

(6) A new language policy : The mother tongue or regional languages should be used as media of education at all stages, and a specific, well-planned and time-bound programme should be prepared for the purpose. The study of English, which is our main window on the world and the main instrument of our direct access to the growing knowledge of the modern scientific era, should be encouraged and emphasized with a stress on reading and comprehension. The study of other international languages like Russian, French, German or Spanish, should also be increasingly cultivated. At the national level, the use of Hindi as a link language should be promoted and the study of Hindi encouraged in non-Hindi-speaking areas. All the national languages of India can also serve as links of a type and, therefore, steps should be taken to promote their study in every linguistic region. In the schools, the three-language formula should be adopted at the secondary stage, the second and the third language being studied for six and three years (at least) respectively. Two languages should be studied at the higher secondary stage, and as a rule, no language study should be compulsory at the university stage unless it is intimately related to the work of the student.

(7) Decentralization, diversification, elasticity and dynamism : The national system of education should be dynamic and keep abreast of changing social needs : no educational system of yesterday can serve the needs of today and even much less, those of tomorrow. It should also be flexible, elastic and diversified as against the existing system which tends to be uniform and rigid and which is based on the assumption that either all move or none (the only consequence of which is that none moves).

Educational authority should also be largely decentralized. The state should respect the autonomy of universities and they, in their turn, should confer autonomy on departments, colleges and teachers. Even at lower levels in the system, there should be large opportunities for schools and teachers to innovate and experiment.

(8) Three channels of education : The existing educational system is based on only one channel of formal education and insists on a single-point entry, sequential annual promotions, full-time attendance by students, and teaching by full-time professional teachers. It must be recognized that learning occurs even outside the formal school through organized non-formal and self-study channels. The national system of education therefore should develop all the three channels of full-time, part-time and own-time education and give them equal status. There should be multiple opportunities for entry so that it should be possible for any individual to continue to learn all his life, use any channel that suits his needs from time to time, and step in or step off the educational system according to his plans.

(9) Common school system : The existing educational system reflects the socio-economic differences between the well-to-do classes and the poor masses. It has a system of high quality good institutions at all levels which are used by the children of the rich and socially or politically important groups, while most of the educational institutions provided by the state are of poor quality and are the only ones available to the vast bulk of the have-nots or marginal people. This segregation is highly undesirable from the point of view of social and national integration. The national system of education should therefore adopt the common school system which abolishes this segregation and enables all children to avail themselves of schools which maintain comparable standards. In particular, it should adopt the neighbourhood school model at the primary stage where all children, irrespective of caste, race, religion, sex or colour, attend the common elementary school established for the locality.

(10) Organizational pattern for school and college classes : The Commission was faced with an intensive and widespread demand for a uniform pattern of school and college classes. It was convinced that the structure, which may be regarded as the skeleton of the educational system, is of the least importance from the point of view of maintaining or improving standards (para. 2.02). It did concede the point that it may be eventually desirable to have a uniform pattern of school and college classes (10 + 2 + 3) and recommended that this pattern should be adopted in all states and union territories under a well-planned programme spread over twenty years. By this, it visualized a "flexible" educational structure covering

- a pre-school stage of one to three years ;
- a primary stage of seven or eight years divided into two sub-stages -- a lower primary stage of four or five years and a higher primary stage of three years ;
- a lower secondary (or high school) stage of three or two years in general education or of one to three years in vocational education ;
- an upper secondary stage of two years of general education or one to three years of vocational education ;
- a higher education stage having a course of three years or more for the first degree, followed by courses of varying duration for the second or research degrees.

To describe all this structure as 10 + 2 + 3 (which is most commonly done) is neither correct nor fair to the Commission. In fact, this numerical expression only means that, in the national system of education, there will be only three public examinations till the first degree is obtained, viz., (1) at the end of class ten ; (2) at the end of class twelve and (3) at the end of the undergraduate stage. It also implies that all these examinations, although conducted by different universities and regional examination boards, would be broadly comparable with one another and officially regarded as 'equivalent' for purposes of recruitment or admission to higher courses.

Qualitative improvement

We may now turn to the recommendations of the Commission in regard to the improvement of standards. The Commission was of the view that standards should not be narrowly defined in such terms as the student's command over English or the mere information base acquired. In fact they should be comprehensively defined in terms of the overall objectives of the educational system and with reference to the quality of young men and women it produced. The Commission also observed that the general picture with regard to standard was one of light and shade : standards had improved in some fields and institutions (which were a minority and were mostly availed of by members of the privileged classes), while they had deteriorated in the vast majority of institutions which were mostly availed of by the common people. It recommended that standards at every level of the national system of education should be adequate (in terms of the objectives laid down), continually rising (to keep pace with the changing conditions), and internationally comparable, at least in a few key sectors. It was from this point of view that the existing situation was far from satisfactory.

Among the several recommendations made by the Commission to improve the quality of education, the following may be highlighted :

(1) Teachers : Standards in education would depend, first and foremost, on the quality, commitment and competence of teachers, and every effort should be made to improve these. From this point of view, the scales of pay for college and university teachers, which are uniform throughout the country, should be improved, and efforts should also be made to reduce the gap between the remuneration of these two categories of teachers. Following this pattern, minimum scales of pay should be laid down for all primary and secondary school teachers throughout the country, and the central government should give special assistance to the states for the purpose. The existing wide gap between the remuneration of teachers at different stages -- primary, secondary and university -- should be reduced. Procedures for the selection of teachers should be improved, and adequate steps taken to ensure satisfactory conditions of work and service (including security) for them. The programmes of training of teachers should be improved, and in particular, schools of education should be established in selected centres, and the training of primary teachers should be integrated with the university system.

(2) An integrated system : In the existing educational system, every institution tends to function in isolation from others and is atomized. In the national system of education, on the contrary, every effort should be made to link institutions with one another, to promote cooperative and collaborative efforts, and to create an integrated system. For instance, the universities should work closely with colleges and also assume certain responsibilities for the improvement of school education. Co-operative teaching between the universities and colleges and among the colleges themselves should be encouraged. The colleges should work closely with secondary schools in their neighbourhood, and secondary schools should do so with primary and middle schools in their vicinity. These groups of institutions can share facilities, help professional growth of teachers, and

develop programmes for identifying and developing talent among students. An integrated system of this type can certainly be very effective in raising standards all-round.

(3) A nation-wide movement for improving standards : If the best results are to be obtained, it is necessary to organize a nation-wide movement for the improvement of standards. The leadership in and responsibility for this programme should be squarely assumed by teachers working closely with the students and the community. A system of institutional planning should be adopted under which every educational institution would strive to optimize the results through better planning and sustained hard work. Such a movement would obviously be assisted by programmes of decentralization and conferment of autonomy as discussed earlier.

(4) Promotion of a new work ethic : Education is essentially a stretching process and the quality of education depends not so much on monetary and material inputs as on the creation of a climate of sustained and dedicated hard work. In the existing system, there is often no adequate challenge to students. The national system of education should strive to stretch the teachers and students fully. From this point of view, the number of working days would be increased, and students should be required to work for 50 to 60 hours per week throughout the year. Vacations may be reduced and preferably utilized for educational purposes. School plants should be used for long hours every day and, wherever possible, throughout the entire year.

(5) Identification and development of talent : It should be a major objective of the national system of education to identify and develop talent. For this purpose, there should be a nation-wide continuous programme of identification of talent at all stages of education, and talented students should be assisted, where necessary, to pursue their studies at the next higher stage, preferably in selected good institutions. For this purpose, there should be an adequate programme of merit scholarships at all stages ; at the university level , there should be a supplementary programme of loan scholarships as well. The selection for scholarships should be done on a regional basis or by grouping similar schools together so that 'talent' does not get necessarily connected with socio-economic backgrounds of children. Talented students in the top bracket should be regarded as wards of the state, which should assume all responsibility for their education. Special attention should be given to the development of talented students through personal guidance and provision of enrichment programmes.

(6) Improved teaching and learning materials : An intensive effort should be made to provide improved teaching and learning material at all stages. The costs of such materials should be reduced, and there should be adequate arrangements to ensure that they are available to all needy students. At the university level, there should be a very large programme of producing teaching and learning materials in Indian languages and by Indian authors who may work, where necessary, with the academics of other countries.

(7) Improved methods of teaching : It is necessary to adopt new and dynamic methods of education which emphasize individual attention and learning, rather than rote memorization and teaching which characterize the existing educational system. Emphasis should be placed on the awakening of curiosity and the development of such skills as self-learning or problem-solving. Students should also be involved in teaching. In fact, the rigid polarization between teachers and students should disappear, and teachers should be looked upon as senior students, and students, as junior teachers.

(8) Evaluation : Evaluation is a continuous part of teaching itself and should be promoted as such. External examinations should be reduced to the minimum and improved. The system of declaring candidates as having passed or failed in school examinations should be abandoned and each student given merely a certificate of his performance in a prescribed form. The eligibility of such students for higher courses or employment could be determined by the authorities concerned on the basis of this performance. There should be an increasing emphasis on internal assessment, and all institutions should carry out a regular and comprehensive internal assessment of all students. **The results of such assessment should be kept separate and made available along with those of external examinations.**

(9) Selective development of schools : Finally, the Commission made two major recommendations regarding selective improvement of schools and universities. In the existing system, grants-in-aid are given to educational institutions on a basis of mechanical equality so that they get the same aid in spite of large variations in quality and performance. Even in institutions wholly maintained by government, there is a tendency to treat all institutions alike rather than to discriminate between them on the basis of performance. This policy inhibits competition for excellence which is essential for qualitative improvement. Moreover, we do not have the necessary human and financial resources to improve all schools. On false grounds of equity, we even refuse to improve a few selected institutions, although such a programme can be an eminently feasible proposition. The Commission was of the view that a concentration of resources is essential to improve quality and that we should adopt a policy of selective improvement of educational institutions (say, ten per cent of the institutions may be improved in a five- to ten- year period), rather than continue the existing policy where no improvement worth the name takes place in any institution under the concept of equal treatment for all. The Commission also laid down some criteria for the proper implementation of this policy : the selected institutions should be fairly numerous (say, ten per cent or so); they should be carefully selected and well distributed over different areas ; their costs should be kept within reasonable limits (say, three times or so as compared to an ordinary school) ; and admissions to them should be open to all sections of the society on an equitable basis. The Commission hoped that such a selective approach would break the stalemate in the present situation and initiate a process of rapid improvement of standards all round. In fact, the Commission described this device as 'seed-farm' technology, according to which excellence is first generated in a few select institutions and then rapidly extended to all the others.

(10) Major universities : Since standards at the university level are extremely crucial, the Commission extended the above principle of selective improvement to the university level also. It suggested that a few universities should be selected for intensive development by concentration of resources, human, material and financial. These "major universities" should be assisted to draw their students and faculty from all parts of the country so that the highest possible standards are maintained. Adequate arrangements should also be made, right from the start, to ensure that the excellence generated in these institutions is extended to the university system as a whole.

Expansion

The main recommendations of the Commission regarding expansion of educational facilities can be summarized as follows :

- (1) Universal elementary education : The Commission emphasized the need to provide universal elementary education of at least seven or eight years to all children on a priority basis. It desired this goal to be reached in all parts of the country by 1986 at the latest. For this purpose, it highlighted the need to provide a primary school within easy walking distance from the house of every child, the establishment of a large number of middle schools, and the organization of a multiple-entry system and non-formal classes for older children who have to work and learn.
- (2) Adult education : The Commission highlighted the need to liquidate illiteracy quickly and expected that the country could be made fully literate by 1986 at the latest. It visualized a fairly large-scale provision of continuing education for all.
- (3) Pre-school education : The Commission visualized a large expansion of pre-school education, especially in rural areas.
- (4) Lower secondary education (up to class ten) : The Commission did not favour any selective admissions at the lower secondary stage and was of the view that the country should ultimately move in the direction of making a school education of ten years available for all children. Therefore, it recommended a liberal policy of expansion at the lower secondary stage.
- (5) Upper secondary education : On the other hand, the Commission recommended that selective admissions should be introduced at the secondary stage.
- (6) Higher education : The Commission recommended the adoption of more rigorous selective admissions at the undergraduate stage, primarily to cut down the growing numbers of the educated unemployed. It was also of the view that admissions at this stage should ordinarily be related to the facilities available. It attached great importance to the post-graduate stage for the maintenance of standards, not only in education, but in all walks of life. Therefore, it suggested a large expansion of post-graduate education, side by side, with an intensive effort at improving standards.
- (7) Vocational and professional education : The Commission laid great stress on the expansion of vocational and professional education. It expected that about 20 per cent of the enrolments in lower secondary education, 50 per cent of those in upper secondary education, and about 30 per cent of those in higher education would be in vocational and professional courses of all categories. It also made several important recommendations regarding the organization of these courses and the establishment of closer relations between education and industry.
- (8) Non-formal education : The restrictions visualized by the Commission in the enrolments at the secondary and university levels were meant only for full-time institutions. However, it recommended that there should be large-scale expansion of non-formal (part-time or own-time) education at these levels so that no individual desirous of studying at a post-elementary stage is denied opportunities for the purpose.
- (9) Reduction of regional imbalances : The Commission drew particular attention to the glaring imbalances in educational development in the different states (and in different districts in each state) and recommended that effective steps should be taken to see that they are reduced.

(10) Education of special groups : The Commission also made a series of recommendations regarding the educational development of special groups like women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

The net effect of these recommendations of the Commission can be seen quantitatively in the following table :

Table 1 : Educational Expansion Visualized by the Education Commission (1966-86)

	<u>Enrolments</u>	
	1966	(000) 1986
1. Adult literacy	(25) [★]	All persons above the age of 10 would be literate
2. Pre-school of one to three years	250	2,352
3. Lower primary (classes I-IV)	37,000 (69.2)	76,239 (110.0)
4. Upper primary (classes V-VII)	12,549 (35.6)	48,714 (90.0)
5. Lower secondary (classes VIII-X)	6,127 (19.1)	24,368 46.0)
6. Upper secondary (classes XI-XII)	1,393 (7.0)	6,873 (20.4)
7. Higher education (all sectors)	1,094 (2.1)	4,160 (6.0)
7.1 Undergraduate (all sectors)	[986]	[3,200]
7.2 Post-graduate (all sectors)	[108]	[960]

★ Figures in parenthesis indicate the proportion to the total population of the corresponding age-group ; for higher education, the age-group

Priorities

Finally, attention must be invited to the priorities accorded by the Education Commission to these three categories of educational programmes. It is of course commonly understood that they will all have to be pursued simultaneously, but such a statement does not determine the relative priorities to be accorded to them, especially in the allocation of resources. The Education Commission found that throughout the post-independence period, the basic priorities we had actually adopted in practice were as follows :

- (1) Expansion of facilities, especially in secondary and university education ;
- (2) Improvement of quality, especially in those areas where the benefits went largely to the elite or well-to-do groups ; and
- (3) Transformation of education to suit the life, needs and aspirations of the people.

The expansion of facilities, which had been accorded the highest priority and received the largest proportion of funds available, occurred not so much in elementary or adult education where it would have benefited the masses and where it was most needed, but in secondary and university education where it largely benefited the haves and where it tended to create difficult problems of educated unemployment. A much smaller proportion of funds was allocated to the improvement of quality ; in practice, quality usually got linked to privilege, and the benefits of even the limited improvements made went mainly to the haves, while standards generally declined in the vast bulk of the institutions which were used by the common man. The third and the last priority was accorded to programmes of transformation, which were never attempted on any scale, and the resources allocated to this sector were also the least. Even such programmes of transformation as required little investment (e.g. emphasis on character formation, decentralization of authority and creation of elastic and dynamic structures and processes) and even those which would have led to some economy (e.g. introduction of non-formal channels in a big way) were not attempted.

The Commission was of the view that these priorities were entirely wrong. It attached the highest priority to the programme of transformation of the educational system and criticized the "naive belief that all education is necessarily good, both for the individual and for society" and asserted that it is only the right type of education, provided on an adequate scale and at acceptable levels of quality, that can lead to national development and that "when these conditions are not satisfied the opposite effect may result" (para. 1.16). It also pointed attention to the urgency of transformation programmes. "Traditional societies which desire to modernize themselves have to transform their education system before trying to expand it, because the greater the expansion of the traditional system of education, the more difficult and costly it becomes to change its character" (para. 1.19). It recommended that "no reform is more important or more urgent than to transform education" (para. 1.20). In its opinion, programmes of qualitative improvement (and especially those that would benefit the common man) should rank next in priority, and the programmes of expansion (again with an emphasis on those which benefit the poor people) would come last (para. 1.17).

Organization and Finance

In India, the responsibility for administering and financing education must vest in a number of official agencies beginning with the local community (village panchayats and municipalities of all types) at one end and rising through the district school boards and state governments to the central government at the other. Even voluntary, private enterprise had a limited and minor but useful role to play. In a national system of education, therefore two important things have to be done : (1) the administrative responsibilities of each of these agencies have to be clearly determined, and (2) as the educational responsibilities at lower levels are much greater while the availability of resources is much larger at the higher levels, an adequate system of grant-in-aid or devolution of resources has to be designed so that the educational responsibilities at each level are matched by the resources available.

(1) Central government : The Commission was of the view that education should continue to be basically a state responsibility as provided in the Constitution. While it was not in favour of including education in the concurrent list, it was opposed to state absolutism in education. Therefore, it provided significant roles in education to the central government, on one hand, and to the local bodies, on the other.

In the opinion of the Commission, the central government had the basic responsibility of providing a stimulating and dynamic but non-coercive leadership based on a national, long-term, and integrated view of education which only a federal government can best have. From this point of view, it should issue periodical statements on the national policy on education and strive to see that they are followed by the state governments. It should have special responsibilities in higher education and research, several programmes of which can only be planned on a national basis. As the Constitution vests it with large and growing resources, it should be held specially responsible for providing adequate financial support to education. This should be done by increasing the central and centrally-sponsored sectors in a very substantial way.

(2) State governments : The states should determine their educational policies within the broad framework of the national policy on education and in response to local conditions and needs. Each state should pass a comprehensive education act to embody and implement these policies. While continuing to be basically responsible for education, the state government should share authority with the central government on the one hand, and with the local authorities, autonomous agencies like universities, and voluntary agencies, on the other.

(3) Local authorities : The Commission recommended the establishment of district school boards and municipal school boards which should have authority to plan, administer and develop all school education in their areas. Within them, certain authority could be decentralized further to still smaller units like village or urban wards. There should be adequate devolution of resources to match the responsibilities entrusted to these organizations. In making this devolution, the principle of equalization should be adopted as an over-riding criterion.

(4) Private enterprise : The growing educational needs of a modernizing society can only be met by the state, and it would be a mistake to show any over-dependence on private enterprise. However, the minorities have certain educational rights guaranteed in the Constitution, and these will have to be respected. Private educational enterprise has also a right to exist in a democratic society and, if it does not seek aid, it may generally be left

to look after itself, subject to compulsory registration. By and large, steps will have to be taken to merge all private educational institutions which seek financial assistance from the state in the common school system.

(5) Administration : The Commission also felt that the administrative structures for education at all levels will have to be considerably revamped. It suggested the creation of an Indian educational service, the establishment of a national staff college for educational planners and administrators, and the revamping of central agencies like the National Council of Educational Research and Training. It also suggested the creation of statutory councils of education in every state, better methods of coordination between the different agencies that deal with education at the state level, and strengthening and improvement of state education departments.

(6) Finance : The Commission found that a national system of education will need a much higher level of financial support. It estimated that if due effect were to be given to its proposals, the total educational expenditure would rise (at constant prices) from about Rs. 600 crore in 1966 (which implies an expenditure of Rs. 12 per head of population or 2.9 per cent of the national income) to about Rs. 4,000 crore in 1986 (which implies an expenditure of Rs. 54 per head of population or 6 per cent of the national income).

(7) Sectoral priorities : The Commission found that ultimately the total expenditure will have to be divided almost equally between the different sectors, one-third for elementary education, one-third for secondary education (including direction, inspection and scholarships), and one-third for higher education.

(8) Fees : The Commission was not in favour of looking on fees as a source of revenue. It proposed that all fees should be abolished till the end of class ten. In upper secondary and university education, every attempt should be made to extend tuition-free education to cover all needy and deserving students.

(8) Economy and utilization : In spite of the increased investments suggested, it will not be possible to create a good system of national education unless intensive efforts are made to cut down unit costs, to economise in every way possible, to optimize the utilization of existing facilities, and to raise resources from voluntary and community contributions.

Implementation

How are all these recommendations going to be implemented, and who are the agents that should be held responsible for implementing them ? Unfortunately, these questions are not answered in detail in the report of the Education Commission. But its overall position on this subject can be summarized as follows :

(1) The responsibility for implementing the recommendations is that of central and state governments. If they will not accept it, no one else will or can (para. 19.51).

(2) The teachers, students, and educational administrators are the principal change agents, and they are responsible for creating the national system of education and maintaining it in a state of continually increasing efficiency.

We may conclude this brief section with a short quotation from the report itself :

- 19.47 Essentials for Successful Implementation. A vigorous and sustained implementation of the recommendations made in the report demands a higher priority than that given so far to education in our national plans for development. A deliberate commitment about the crucial role of education in national development can alone provide the psychological motivation and energy needed for a massive programme of implementation. We realize that such conviction will depend essentially upon the extent to which education is effectively and demonstrably related to the life, needs and aspirations of the country. This is a task mainly for the educators, and it is the urgency of this that we have emphasized in the report.
- 19.48 Equally essential is the need for dedicated hard work. Today the nation is facing, as never before, the challenge of hunger, unemployment, ill-health and poverty. A vital element which would help the country to meet this challenge is a revitalized education which, in its turn, can only be created if the leaven of idealistic teachers and administrators exists. Idealism is needed, now more than ever, in all walks of life and especially in education. It may not be easy to plan for it ; but it is doubtful if anything worth while will be achieved if we cannot generate it in fair measure.
- 19.49 Education thus needs and demands, more than anything else, hard work and dedicated service. In particular, it presents a supreme challenge to the students, teachers and educational administrators who are now called upon to create a system of education related to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and to maintain it at the highest level of efficiency. It is upon their response to this challenge that the future of the country depends.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (1968)

How does the Government of India deal with the report of a commission appointed by it in a field like education which is essentially a state responsibility ? An examination of what happened on the reports of the earlier commissions -- the university and secondary education commissions -- shows that this action is three-fold : (1) the central government circulates copies of the report to state governments, universities and other agencies concerned for information and necessary action, generally without expressing any views of its own ; (2) it tries to pursue the implementation of the report through the normal channels like the Central Advisory Board of Education or Vice-Chancellor's Conference ; and (3) it addresses itself simultaneously to the implementation of those recommendations of the report which are addressed directly to it. If possible, the centre identifies some key recommendations and implements them on a priority basis - a 'key' recommendation being defined as one which, when implemented, will automatically facilitate the implementation of several other recommendations. For instance, the recommendation of the University Education Commission that a University Grants Commission (UGC) be created at the federal level was a key recommendation because the creation of the UGC would bring into existence a mechanism which could implement most other recommendations of the Commission. Quite obviously, it was decided that action on the report of the Education Commission (1964-66) also should be taken on similar lines.

Action on the report

The first of these three steps was taken without difficulty. The report of the Commission was released to the press by the Education Minister, Mr. M.C. Chagla, as soon as it was handed over to him towards the end of June 1966. He held a press conference in which he highlighted the main recommendations of the report, and a printed summary of these was quickly made available to all. This initiated a nation-wide and intensive debate on the subject.

The third step was also decided upon without much difficulty. As the principal term of reference of this Commission was to suggest the model of a national system of education on which the central government alone could take a decision after consulting the state governments and the universities, it was decided to treat the following recommendation of the Commission as the key recommendation to be acted upon on a priority basis : "The Government of India should issue a statement on the national policy in education which should provide guidance to the state governments and the local authorities in preparing and implementing educational plans in their areas" (para. 18.58). It was, therefore, decided that the second and third steps should be combined into one, that the views of the state governments, universities, and all others concerned should be called for on the subject and that they should be discussed in depth in the Central Advisory Board of Education, the Vice-Chancellors' Conference, and both Houses of Parliament, before the central government issued the statement.

Problems to be faced

The Commission took the view that its recommendations should be considered together and taken as a package deal, because a national system of education cannot be created without a comprehensive and integrated approach. Unfortunately, the official machinery is neither aware of this need nor properly geared to meet it. What it prefers is to deal separately and individually with a few recommendations for each of which a separate file can be opened and each of which can be specifically made the responsibility of some individual or section. Even the general public has the same inclination. Very soon, therefore, it became evident that no one was prepared to consider the recommendations of the Commission as a package deal and that almost every one picked up some individual recommendations of his choice, accepted a few, rejected some, and modified others without realizing that in the process he had totally destroyed the basic purpose of creating a national system of education. The main recommendations that ultimately came to dominate the scene were those relating to language, the neighbourhood school, teachers' salaries, and the pattern of school and college classes (which many persons equate almost entirely with the national system of education or the entire thinking of the Commission). As one can easily recognize, these were probably among the less important of the Commission's recommendations. It is thus a tragedy that the recommendations of the one Commission which was directed to look comprehensively at education were considered mostly in a piecemeal fashion.

This trend to look piecemeal even at a comprehensive report like that of the Commission is strengthened by quite a different set of factors. When a large number of recommendations are made, different vested interests and special groups generally try to pick out ideas favourable to them and oppose those which are against their interests. For instance, teachers picked up the recommendations regarding remuneration with the precautions and safety valves which the Commission had imposed. The elite and prestigious colleges picked up the concept of autonomous colleges and rightly so, but this created a relationship between elitism and the concept of autonomy which has, on the whole, impeded the progress of the reform. The concept of major universities was opposed in most quarters. The supporters of basic education felt that its claims to become the national system of education had been ignored, and so on. A piecemeal rather than a package-deal approach was therefore adopted in looking at the recommendations of the Commission and each interested group chose to support or oppose individual recommendations in accordance with its predilections. Those who supported certain individual recommendations did not always come together to support the report as a whole or to endorse its comprehensive approach. On the other hand, those who did not like certain individual recommendations easily joined together to condemn the report as a whole on the effective logic that if the report as a whole is thrown out, they would automatically win their objective of dropping some specific proposals. In the long run, these proved to be the majority and they won.

The creation of a national system of education does need favourable political, economic and social conditions. Unfortunately, the assumptions made by the Education Commission (1964-66) in this behalf proved unrealistic. It had postulated strong central and state governments that would be committed to educational development, stable political conditions, a declining birth-rate, a growth of national income at six per cent per annum, a lessening of social tensions due to effective development, a strengthened and revitalized bureaucracy, a committed and competent body of teachers, and a community of students dedicated to the pursuit of learning. None of these conditions has been fulfilled, and one may also argue that it is

not even proper to expect such ideal situations. The fact, however, remains that in all these matters, the actual conditions in the country in the twelve years after the report of the Commission (i.e. 1966-78) were even worse than in the twelve years preceding it (1952-64) and that these were probably the worst in the period 1967-69 when the most crucial decisions were being taken on the report of the Commission. All things considered, one is forced to conclude that the discussion and decision-making on the report of the Education Commission became extremely ill-timed. It is true that the assumptions of the Education Commission were too utopian and that all who would like to create a national system of education must be prepared to work under or in spite of such conditions, but that makes the task extremely difficult and we were certainly not prepared for such eventualities.

Even on the academic front, the conditions were unfavourable. Mr. M.C. Chagla described the report as the Magna Carta of teachers, and the Commission had placed great faith in them for initiating and sustaining a movement for radical educational reform. Somehow, the report did not enthuse the teachers, and they have done little to create the educational system visualized by the Commission in spite of more than one revision of salaries. The students have been dissatisfied with education and often talk of and demand radical changes, but what they actually do is more disruptive than helpful to educational growth. The teachers and their organizations could have done so many things which have remained undone ; and by and large, educational administrators have not displayed the needed leadership. There are of course several noble individual exceptions to these generalizations, but these silver linings do not reduce the general gloom.

Committee of Members of Parliament

Undaunted by these factors, Dr. Triguna Sen^{*} went ahead with the proposals to prepare a statement on the national policy on education as had been decided earlier. He immediately set up a committee of Members of Parliament, representing all the different political parties, and expected its report to provide him with a working draft of the national policy. He expected this to be a trump-card in his hand to help him implement the report and even to pass a National Education Act whose possibility the Education Commission had desired to be explored.

The Committee of Members of Parliament was the first ever occasion in our history when persons belonging to all parties sat in round-table to hammer out a blue-print for a national system of education. There was a difference of opinion whether such a committee should have been set up at all. One view was that it is for the party in power to crystallize its views on education and force its policies on the country as a whole, because education can never be politically neutral. These persons argued that it was for the cabinet to decide the national educational policy, to place it before Parliament for approval, and to resign if it could not carry Parliament with it. On the other hand, there was a view that education should be beyond politics and all-party or no-party affair, so that a national educational policy which must have a long-term perspective can continue to be implemented in spite of changes in government. It was on this assumption that the committee of the Members of Parliament was set up. One is not sure which of these two views is correct : the probability is that the first of these views is right.

* Dr. Sen became Education Minister in March 1967 following the parliamentary election in February.

It soon became evident that no political party had really applied its mind to the educational problem in depth and formulated well-conceived long-term policies of its own (this statement does not exclude even the Congress Party). In fact, education was never a major vote-catching subject and no political party had ever thought it worthwhile to project an educational policy of its own and make it an important part of its election manifesto. The average politician did not also have an adequate "literacy in education" because there has been so little dialogue between politicians and educationists. This made meaningful discussions very difficult. The talks in the committee, therefore, tended to be ad hoc or desultory and were more in the nature of party wrangles than of a national effort to evolve an agreed educational system.

The terms of reference to the committee were three-fold :

(1) to consider the report of the Education Commission, (2) to prepare a draft statement on the national policy on education, and (3) to identify a programme for immediate action. The wide differences in the committee may be inferred from the fact that nine out of its 30 members wrote minutes of dissent which ran into 23 pages against a report of 26 pages. Most of the minutes of dissent related only to two issues, viz. the neighbourhood school and the language policy.

The committee was provided with all the relevant papers, the report of the Commission and all the comments received thereon from the state governments and others. It agreed with the Commission on the urgent need to create a national system of education but differed from the Commission's approach in three significant ways :

(1) It totally rejected the recommendation of the Education Commission regarding selective development of educational institutions, viz., the creation of six major universities and the upgrading of 10 per cent of the institutions at all levels to optimum standards. It argued that better results would be obtained if minimum standards can be maintained in all institutions and special additional assistance, on the basis of proper criteria, given to institutions which show a high level of performance and promise.

(2) It placed much greater emphasis on the expansion of facilities. In fact, it practically voted for the continuance of the then existing policy which put expansion above everything else. It did not also agree to the principle of selective admissions at the upper secondary and university stages and recommended that every effort should be made to provide admissions to institutions of higher education to all eligible students who desire to study further.

(3) It turned down several recommendations of the Commission to create new administrative structures or to change existing ones. With one dissenting vote, it also opposed the creation of the Indian Educational Service. It was of the view that these proposals would only increase bureaucratization and unproductive expenditure.

The committee also identified 16 programmes for immediate action. These recommendations, though formally adopted, do not give a correct idea of what happened in the actual discussions. As stated earlier, it was only the first three items on language, neighbourhood schools, and the 10 + 2 + 3 pattern that were noticed. Most of the time was taken up with the proposal of adopting the regional languages as media of education at all stages in a period of five years (this was a modification of the Commission's recommendation which had suggested a ten-year period). Anyone following the public debates on the report of the Commission

at this time would have easily got the impression that this was the only recommendation of the Commission and that this one reform would create a national system of education and solve all our educational ills.

Other discussions

With the report of the committee of Members of Parliament in his hand, Dr. Triguna Sen convened a meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education and a special Conference of the Vice-Chancellors of Universities to discuss not only the report of the Education Commission (1964-66), but also the report of the Committee of Members of Parliament. There is nothing special to report about the discussions in the Central Advisory Board of Education which were very similar to those in the committee of members of Parliament, with the highest emphasis on the issue of the medium of instruction at the university stage. The Vice-Chancellors' Conference discussed almost nothing except the proposal about the major universities (which it rejected outright) and the medium of instruction at the university stage. Finally, the report was discussed in both Houses of Parliament, and in both these discussions also the issue of the medium of instruction at the university stage dominated the scene.

National policy on education (1968)

The stage was now set for the issue of a statement of the national policy on education. A drafting committee in the Ministry of Education had prolonged discussions and the rather tame draft that finally emerged was approved by the Cabinet and released in 1968. (See annex I for the text of the Statement).

Several questions arise in this context. The first is whether all this effort was worthwhile and whether a statement on the national policy on education does serve any useful purpose. When the recommendation was made, several arguments were advanced in its favour :

- (1) Such a statement would provide a specific and clear direction to central, state and local governments to plan and implement programmes of educational reconstruction.
- (2) It would also provide similar guidelines on the nationally preferred educational developments to all educational institutions, teachers and students and help in the development of a national system of education.
- (3) It would also help in educating public opinion and serve the same purpose as the educational provisions which certain countries have introduced in their constitutions.
- (4) It would stabilize educational policies, which would not be easily tampered with by the personal whims of Education Ministers who come and go.

This is no doubt a strong case in support of the proposals and whether one should or should not have a statement on the national policy on education depends upon the character of the statement. If the policy of statement can serve the above objectives, it is certainly worthwhile having it, and an acid test as to whether it does serve these purposes or not is to ask the question : What difference would it make to educational programmes if the statement did not exist ? If we are in a position to say that if the statement had not been there, such and such desirable things would not have happened, the statement is certainly relevant and is worth having. If the existence of the statement has no effect on current policies and programmes, it does not serve the above purposes at all and is obviously valueless.

Our main comment on the "Statement of National Policy on Education" (1968) is that it does not serve these specific purposes adequately. This has happened mainly because in preparing the Statement, the basic approach was to make it non-specific, non-committal and as innocuous as possible with a view to avoiding controversies or shirking responsibilities. The problem may be illustrated by taking one paragraph from the Statement, say, the paragraph on universal elementary education for all children in the age-group of 6-14. We already have Art. 45 of the Constitution on this subject which enjoins us to fulfil this directive by 1960. What one expects is that we should take all our experience in this field between 1950 and 1966 into account, analyze the causes of our failure, determine the way in which we could make better progress in the future and, more specifically, fix a revised target date for the attainment of the objective. A statement in response to these specific issues is certainly worth having and all these issues had also been raised during the discussion on the formulation of the national policy on education.

Unfortunately, the government desired not to face these issues squarely but to sweep most of them under the carpet. The Education Commission had given high priority to the programme, accepted the general demand that it should be implemented within a short period of time, and worked on the hypothesis that universal elementary education should be provided to all children in the age-group 6-11 by 1980-81 and to those in the age group 11-14 by 1985-86. While the priority given to this programme by the Commission was generally welcomed, its proposals on the subject came in for heavy criticism on the ground that the period of implementation was too long. One view strongly urged that we should lay down a definite time-limit for realizing universal elementary education for children in the age-group 6-14 and that this time-limit should preferably be 1975-76 or at the latest 1980-81. On the other side, it was argued that we had already treated this as a time-bound programme in the Constitution itself and failed to keep our promise and that another limitation of time was not worthwhile, especially because it would more likely imply yet another failure. The state governments took a technical position : they said that they would do the programme by 1976-77 or 1980-81, but this would need the investment of very large amounts which they would not be able to afford without corresponding special assistance from the Centre. If this were not forthcoming, they wanted a longer time to reach the goal which, in some cases, went up to 2010 and even 2030 A.D. The Centre was not prepared to commit itself to a special grant-in-aid for this programme, even in respect of the most backward states. The official calculations showed that the proposals of the Commission were really over-ambitious and that a realistic time-limit to reach the goal would go even beyond 1986. This was neither acceptable nor politically convenient to state. It was finally decided that the "Statement of National Policy on Education" would deliberately make no mention of any target date to provide universal elementary education for all children, either for the age-group 6-11 or for the age-group 11-14.

All in all, one is left with the impression that the Statement is far from satisfactory, mainly because of the political and economic circumstances of the period and the violent eruption of the language controversy. It should not be forgotten that it was finalized by a weak central government which was more anxious to avoid controversies than to bring about radical educational changes.

What lessons does one draw from these events ?

(1) No political party in the country is committed to a radical reconstruction of education in the country and for the creation of a national system of education. The only test of such a commitment is that the party is prepared to take the hard decisions needed for the purpose and to make the necessary financial provision and is even prepared to go into the wilderness if it fails to do so. When the chips are down, we find that political parties fight shy, preferring to survive in power, and let down education.

(2) It is only some individuals in different political parties who show a commitment to education and interest in radical reconstruction. They are given the freedom to talk because it does bring some populist gains, but the speeches of these individuals do not represent party policies. If they press too hard or if a crisis occurs, no party hesitates to drop them like hot bricks. In fact, the general position of education ministers within the party is an index of the status of education in party policies : most education ministers belong to the second level leadership, and although many of them are earnest and learned individuals, they do not belong to the political heavy-weight category. Let it be clearly understood that no Education Minister can deliver the goods unless he is also a political heavy-weight and unless he has a specific mandate from his party.

(3) The talk of creating a national system of education and bringing about a radical reconstruction of education is still a populist slogan and continues to live as a hang-over of the pre-independence struggles for national education between 1906 and 1947. It is not yet a political reality because the country has yet to understand the price to be paid for the purpose and is not yet prepared to pay it.

The Education Commission said : The responsibility for creating a national system of education is that of the governments - central and state. We should also add that it is the basic responsibility of the political parties that make these governments. If they will not accept it, no one else can or will.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

(1966-1978)

The period of about twelve years (1966-78) forms a distinct epoch in our educational history. In 1966, the Education Commission submitted its report. This was discussed for about two years, and the "Statement of National Policy on Education" was issued in 1968. Both the report of the Commission and the National Policy on Education were taken as the basis of educational development in the Fourth and Fifth Five-Year Plans. All the Education Ministers of this period (Professor V.K.R.V. Rao, Shri S.S. Ray, and Prof. S. Nurul Hasan) declared that they would strive to implement the report of the Education Commission and the National Policy on Education, although they did have certain personal reservations on some issues. The Janata Government which came to power in 1977 declared, however, that it would like to revise the National Policy on Education (1968) and make all such changes as may be deemed necessary. It was of course understood, though it was not said in so many words, that some of these changes may go even beyond the report of the Education Commission and even be contrary to its proposals. It did not appoint another commission, but it did review programmes in classes I - X through the Ishwarbhai Patel Committee and those in classes XI - XII through the Adiseshiah Committee. At its request, the UGC has prepared a statement on the development of higher education and is now reviewing all its programmes. The revised "Statement on the National Policy on Education" which the Janata Government had promised to the people has also been recently released (1979). There is thus ample evidence to show that the era of the Education Commission which began in 1966 is now over and that the education of the country enters a different phase of development with the "Statement on National Policy on Education" (1979).

The main object of this study is to examine the manner in which the recommendations of the Education Commission were implemented. In view of the facts stated above, we shall restrict this review to the period 1966 - 78. We shall, however, extend the scope of the study to include also an evaluation of the recommendations themselves. Every commission may make mistakes of commission (i.e. wrong ideas included within its report), as well as of omission (i.e. of good and relevant ideas left out of its report). This Commission is no exception and an evaluation of its proposals must be done side by side with an assessment of their implementation.

Comprehensive or selective approach

One of the earliest issues raised in the process of implementation was whether the proposals of the Education Commission regarding the creation of a national education system should be looked at comprehensively, as a package deal, or whether they could be selectively examined and implemented on an individual basis. We naturally pressed for a comprehensive approach, i.e. for identification of key recommendations covering all aspects and all stages of education and for implementing them simultaneously and in a concerted fashion. It did not take us long to realize that no one would buy the proposal and that almost everyone thought compartmentally in terms of some programmes of his interest or choice. Even during the discussions themselves, therefore, we changed the strategy and accepted the idea of a

selective implementation. As Dr. Kothari^(*) observed : "I am prepared to forget the comprehensive approach. Let them select even one thing (e.g. common school or work-experience) and do it well". I also accepted the situation as a hard reality of life.

In this context, it may be of interest to ask what the Commission itself expected about the implementation of its proposals. This was highlighted in the brief conveyance letter of the Chairman, in the hope that even those who do not read the thousand pages of the report would certainly find the time to read this two-page statement. It makes three points :

(1) What the country needs is an 'educational revolution' which will transform, improve and expand the existing educational system through a vigorous and sustained programme of action spread over 20 years (1966-86).

(2) This educational revolution is not a one-shot affair. "In the rapidly changing world of today, one thing is certain : yesterday's educational system will not serve today's, and even less so, the needs of tomorrow". Therefore, "the single most important thing needed now is to get out of the rigidity of the present system", emphasize experimentation and innovation, and evolve an educational policy which will be flexible enough to adjust itself to changing circumstances which are, in a way, unpredictable.

(3) The proposals of the Commission are in the nature of a package deal and will have to be taken as such if a national system of education is to be fully created. However, in this long-term task, the Commission would be satisfied even if its report provides "the basic thinking and framework for taking at least the first steps" towards bringing about this educational revolution.

It is thus obvious that the Commission itself was not against a selective implementation. Of course the main issue was not the principle of selective approach, which had become inevitable, but the specific recommendations to be selected because, depending on the nature of this selection, the whole objective of the Commission would be gained or destroyed. Here we found ourselves rather helpless. A selection was forced on us by various circumstances beyond our control, and we were not always able to sell a particular recommendation to which we attached significance.

Recommendations that attracted wide attention

Looking back at the hectic discussions that took place over the report of the Education Commission during 1966-1968 and also at the various other decisions that have since been taken while formulating educational plans during the last ten years, we find that several proposals made by the Commission attracted very wide attention. Among them, the following may be mentioned.

(1) National system of education : A question was raised whether all our preoccupation with the national system of education was not a mere hang-over of the past, whether the concept was still valid in the post-independence period, and if so, how precisely would a national system of education be defined.

(2) Relating education to the past and the future : The Education Commission had observed that Indian education will have to be related both to the past and future of the country. This raised a discussion on several difficult problems relating to Indian tradition and national development.

(*) Dr. D.S. Kothari, Chairman of the University Grants Commission, served as Chairman of the Education Commission.

(3) Medium of instruction at the university level : The Commission had underplayed the language issue, but it did say that the regional languages should become the media of instruction at the university level in a period of 10 years. Political parties picked this up as the most important recommendation, and as shown in the preceding chapter, battles royal were fought over it. As a matter of hindsight, one finds that the Commission did make an unintended but significant contribution to the ultimate solution of this problem, especially because of the supreme dedication, commitment and sacrifice of Dr. Triguna Sen. If a future historian were to describe the Education Commission as the "Commission on the Medium of Instruction at the university", he would not be far wrong.

(4) Non-formal education : The Education Commission was one of the first in the world to point out the severe limitations of an exclusive dependence on the formal system of full-time education and to emphasize the need for non-formal education which can be pursued on a part-time or own-time (self-study) basis. It also highlighted the need to move from a single-point to a multi-point entry system (*). It was Professor S. Nurul Hasan, as Education Minister, who picked up this recommendation and made intensive efforts through the Central Advisory Board of Education to make the country accept the concept of non-formal education. He succeeded, and the programme is now on the ground with an immense potential for the future. This is yet another area in which the Commission made a significant difference.

(5) Education for the people : The report of the Commission did succeed in inviting the attention of the country to the massive problem of the education of our people. This is but right, because it is the only Commission after 1882 to deal with elementary education and the only Commission ever to deal with adult education (including liquidation of adult illiteracy). In the Fourth Plan (1968-69 to 1973-74), Professor V.K.R.V. Rao made a valiant but unsuccessful attempt to promote a programme of adult education. In the Fifth Plan (1974-75 to 1978-79), the combined efforts of Professor S. Nurul Hasan and Professor S. Chakravarty, who was then a member of the Planning Commission, led to a massive programme of elementary education, which unfortunately did not work out. In the Sixth Plan (1978-79 to 1982-83), a massive attack is now being mounted, both in elementary and adult education (with full use of non-formal education).

(6) Pattern of school and college classes : The idea that the country should adopt a common pattern of 10 + 2 + 3 was first put forward by the Calcutta University Commission (1917-19). Since then, every commission had toyed with the idea. It was also highlighted by the Education Commission, although at a lower level of priority. Thanks again to Professor S. Nurul Hasan, the idea was pursued with considerable vigour during the last few years. One can easily assert that the Education Commission has done more for making the idea a reality than any preceding Commission.

(7) Teachers' salaries : Improvement of teachers' salaries has been a continual programme since 1947. However, it goes without saying that perhaps the maximum achievements in the field have been made in the period following the report of the Education Commission. Here again credit goes mainly to Professor S. Nurul Hasan. The statement of Mr. M.C. Chagla that the report of the Commission is a Magna Carta for teachers is essentially correct.

(*) These ideas have now become world famous because of the report of the International Commission on the Development of Education (Learning to Unesco, 1972) which highlighted them.

(8) The common school system : The Commission had drawn attention to the segregation that now takes place between the education of the children of the upper and middle classes, who generally attend private, fee-charging and good quality institutions, and the children of the poor, who can only avail themselves of the publicly supported, free, but poor quality institutions run by government and local bodies. Its proposal to do away with this segregation through the adoption of a common school system has created a fierce debate on the future of public and special schools in the country. The debate is still on, and although the recommendation has been formally accepted, very little is being done to implement it.

Recommendations that attracted limited attention

There were several recommendations of the Commission that raised little controversy, if any, and were readily accepted, either in the original form made by the Commission or in some modified form. These include the following :

- (1) Making work-experience and social or national service an integral part of education at all stages ;
- (2) Emphazising science education and research ;
- (3) Vocationalizing secondary education ;
- (4) Cultivating moral and social values and character formation ;
- (5) Promoting decentralization, diversification, elasticity and dynamism in the education system ;
- (6) Improving the general education and professional preparation of teachers ;
- (7) Integrating the different stages of education for qualitative improvement ;
- (8) Creating a nation-wide movement for improving standards, including institutional planning ;
- (9) Creating a climate of sustained hard work ;
- (10) Identification and development of talent and provision of scholarships ;
- (11) Improving curricula, teaching and learning materials, and methods of teaching and evaluation ;
- (12) Developing pre-school education ;
- (13) Educating girls, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes ;
- (14) Reducing regional imbalances ; and
- (15) Increasing educational expenditure from 3 per cent in 1965-66 to 6 per cent in 1985-86.

It is our sad experience that recommendations which are readily accepted are generally those which are not implemented or indifferently implemented. These recommendations of the Commission are no exception to this general finding.

Recommendations which were opposed and rejected or just ignored

Finally, there were several recommendations of the Commission that were stoutly opposed and rejected. These include the following :

- (1) Change of priorities in educational development ;
- (2) Selective admissions at the upper secondary and university stages ;
- (3) Major universities ;
- (4) Selective improvement of schools ;
- (5) School curricula at two levels ;

(6) Organization of new educational structures and the creation of an Indian Educational Service ; and

(7) Continuance of education in the state list.

In addition, several other recommendations of the Commission were just ignored. I suppose that is the penalty one has to pay for opening one's mouth too wide and making innumerable recommendations.

Of course, things could have been much better or much worse. But if one agrees to be satisfied with the humbler objective of stimulating thought and taking the first steps towards the creation of a national system of education, the above record is not bad. I would even consider it good, especially in view of the difficult economic and political conditions through which we have passed.

A national system of education

Since the principal term of reference of the Education Commission was to advise government on the national pattern of education, the discussions generally began with the question : what is this national system of education? The answer of the Commission was that we first evolved this concept as a part of our struggle for freedom between 1900 and 1947, that the concept is still valid, and that we should continue to use it, with such modifications as would be necessary from time to time, in all our future attempts at educational reconstruction as well.

Historically, one easily understands why the concept arose as a reaction to the colonial attempt to foist a pale imitation of the British educational system on India. In the pre-independence period, therefore, the word 'national' had a specific and significant connotation and meant, in the words of the Resolution of the Indian National Congress (1906) thereon, education on national lines, under national control, and directed towards the realization of the national destiny. Each of these three phrases needs a brief comment.

(1) National lines : The basic assumption underlying this phrase was that every society is unique and needs a unique educational system rooted in its own traditions. It was thus an expression of the Swadeshi spirit in education, and it was necessary to emphasize this because it is only a people who have a faith in themselves and are proud of their own traditions that can fight colonial rule. Of course, due care was taken to see that this link with the past did not become revivalist or chauvinist, and in this, the ideas of Tagore and Gandhi are extremely important. Needless to say, this concept still continues to be relevant. Good education must be rooted in the traditions of the people and must give them a proper pride in themselves.

(2) National control : In a colonial situation, one understands why the idea of national control was given the highest priority. It then meant two things : (a) the Indian Educational Service, which consisted exclusively of non-Indians who held all important positions in education departments, should be abolished and all educational services should be fully Indianized; and (b) the control of education should be vested in the Indian people and exercised through Indian Ministers responsible to legislatures elected by the people. Both these objectives have now been realized. New recruitment to the Indian Educational Service was discontinued in 1924, and by 1947, all educational services were fully Indianized. Indians began to be associated with primary education in 1884 under the institution of local self-government. Under the government of India Act, 1919, education

became mostly a provincial subject and was transferred to the control of Indian Ministers under the system of dyarchy. With the introduction of provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act, 1935, this control was considerably increased. With the attainment of independence in 1947, the Indian people had full control over all education, both at the central and state levels.

(3) National destiny : In the pre-independence period, this implied, first and foremost, the attainment of independence. Hence national education was expected to cultivate the love of the motherland, to promote patriotism, and to train freedom fighters. Even in these early days, the expression 'national destiny' was meant to cover not only political freedom, but also the 'greater' India of our dreams. In particular, Mahatma Gandhi initiated debate on the future society that we should have in the country and kept it alive side by side with the struggle for freedom. The attainment of independence has made this concept even more relevant, because all our efforts can now be concentrated on the creation of the desirable society, and education must prepare the people to determine what this society should be and to dedicate themselves to its creation. Even the concept of patriotism is not dated by the attainment of independence. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, and a free people need patriotism more, not less.

It will thus be seen that of the three concepts of national education developed in the pre-independence period, the two concepts relating education to the past and the future of the country are still relevant and that only the concept of national control has become superfluous. It is desirable that we should continue to use the historically hallowed concept of a national system of education with one modification, viz. the idea of 'national' control should not be confused with 'central' control, but should be redefined to mean a decentralized system of educational administration in which the central government, the state government, the local bodies, autonomous organizations like the universities, and even voluntary agencies, will have a role to play. This is precisely what the Education Commission has proposed.

For convenience of reference, it may be stated that a national system of education for India

- should be rooted in Indian traditions as reinterpreted and redefined from time to time ;
- should be closely related to the new society we desire to create in the country as adumbrated in the Preamble to the Constitution ;
- should be adequately geared for creating, preserving and diffusing knowledge, for developing the essential skills among the people, and for inculcating human and social values, especially those enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution ;
- should provide a common educational system (in which all the three channels of incidental, non-formal and formal education have an equal status) to all individuals, without any discrimination on grounds of class, social or economic status, caste, religion or sex ;
- should abolish illiteracy and provide universal elementary education to children in the age-group 6-14 ;
- should provide equal opportunities to every individual to receive all the post-elementary education he desires and qualifies for ;
- should provide equal and adequate opportunities to all citizens for continuing education and life-long learning ;

- should have adequate provision for identification and intensive cultivation of all available talent ;
- should be fully responsible for all education of the most talented children who would be regarded as wards of the state ; and
- should maintain adequate standards (in all institutions and at all levels) which would be continually rising and internationally comparable, at least in a few key sectors.

These objectives emerge clearly from the recommendations of the Education Commission ; and they are and shall continue to be valid. It is the task of each succeeding generation of teachers, students, educational thinkers and administrators to invest the skeleton of these objectives with the flesh and blood of concrete programmes to suit the conditions of the day.

Relating education to the past and the future

Of the ten objectives of the national education system stated above, the first two make an attempt to link education with society, with its historical past and the desired future. This is precisely what the Commission meant by linking education with the life, needs and aspirations of the people. Obviously, this is the most crucial aspect of the national system of education. The questions to be asked in this context are :

(1) How has the Education Commission linked national education with our past and future ? (2) Are the proposals of the Commission sound and acceptable ? (3) If not, what amendments are needed in them ?

(1) Science and spirituality : One basic proposal made by the Commission in this regard is that science (which is the force of the present and future) should be closely linked to spirituality (which is the best contribution of the Indian tradition, not only to our culture, but to the culture of mankind). There are no differences on the views of the Commission to stress science, both for its material and cultural uses, and to create a scientific temper among the people, but serious reservations have been expressed in several quarters on the proposal of cultivating spiritual values. The problem, therefore, needs some elucidation, especially because the long discussions held in the Commission on this important issue are not adequately reflected in its report (I personally assume all responsibility for this).

The development of India, in the opinion of the Commission, will have to be viewed in the context of human development as a whole, partly because we are the second biggest chunk of that humanity and mainly because the world is becoming increasingly interdependent and smaller. In this larger context, the basic issue is to educate man to live in peace and harmony with himself, with nature and with other individuals in society. All these aspects are now totally out of balance. In spite of all the explosion of knowledge, man knows least about himself, is unable (or even frightened) to live with himself, and has abandoned the ancient tradition of conquering and disciplining himself. On the other hand, he has extended the concepts of conquest and exploitation to his relations with nature. This has, no doubt, led to the creation of a plenty of material goods and services, but it has also led to unbridled consumerism, degradation of the environment, depletion of scarce, non-renewable resources, and to a mad race among the nations to have control over the earth's resources. Even before the advent of the scientific era, man had extended the concepts of conquest and exploitation to his relations with other men. Science has increased his capacity to do so a thousand-fold. This has resulted in untold misery and suffering to millions of people, led to a tremendous increase in social and political tensions, created huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, and posed a serious threat to the very existence of man. If all these evils

are to be avoided, man's relations with himself, with nature, and with society have to be transformed on the principles of love, harmony and service, and he has to be educated to know himself and to conquer and discipline himself. This basic change in his relations with himself will automatically lead to the desired changes in his relations with nature and with society also.

In this fundamental task of changing man's relations to himself, the Commission felt that the Indian tradition could make a very valuable contribution. This tradition has always emphasized self-knowledge, the need to conquer and discipline oneself, the search for freedom through renunciation rather than through enjoyment, and the cultivation of the values of non-violence, non-acquisitiveness, non-involvement and love for all living things. If man were to cultivate these values, the Commission felt, he would be able to control the forces of science and technology and learn to make a human use of his knowledge, not to fight and kill or to conquer, dominate and exploit, but to conserve, love and serve. The Commission felt that Indians owed it to themselves to begin this transformation within the country by relating their national education system with their hoary tradition and by cultivating the spiritual values it stood for.

One may or may not agree with these views of the Commission, but the issues raised are crucial, not only for development, but even for the very survival of man. If the problem is recognized, and the solutions given by the Commission are not acceptable, we should strive for alternative and more satisfactory answers.

Even when people disagree with the Commission's view that the best contribution of the Indian tradition to the national system of education is the cultivation of spiritual values, they still agree with the basic thesis put forward by the Commission that the national system of education must strive to relate every Indian citizen meaningfully to the country's past. It is obviously wasteful and even pernicious to produce 'educated' but 'rootless' young men and women. The only result of this policy is to leave the task of linking education and tradition (because they must be linked anyhow) to the home, and this, in the present circumstances, can only lead to the continuance of the divided society we have. If we are to move in the direction of creating a cohesive and integrated society, we must make the national system of education responsible for rooting all our citizens in the common Indian tradition. Effective ways of doing this will have to be concretized.

It is unfortunate that very little work has been done in this field. We must study the Indian tradition in depth, secularize or delink its concepts from religion, and integrate it with the educational system. This is an area of darkness which calls for the labour of some of our best intellectuals for years to come.

(2) Education and development : The Education Commission laid the highest emphasis on relating education to development or to the creation of a greater India. That is why it designated its report "Education and National Development". One expects this to be the best part of the Commission's report, but for various reasons, it turned out to be the weakest. There are two basic weaknesses in the presentation of the Commission on this problem :

- (a) The first is that its positive statements are far from adequate and even misleading. For instance, it speaks of national prosperity in which there would be growth in India's trade and commerce, more food for all, and better health. However, a mere wish of this type has little meaning unless we say why India has remained poor and how its poverty can be eliminated. On this the Commission

had little to say. Its statement that "prosperity is within the reach of every nation which has determination, willingness to work hard and a stable and progressive government" is too naive. Its identification of national development only with increase in productivity, social and national integration, modernization, and cultivation of moral, social and spiritual values is equally naive.

- (b) The second basic weakness is that the Commission does not even refer to many crucial aspects of development. These include, at the universal level, the inegalitarian international economic order and the exploitation of the developing countries by the developed ones. At the national level, they include the extremely skewed structure of property ownership ; the arbitrary and inegalitarian wage-structure we have evolved, the social and cultural determinants of poverty ; the large existing inequalities - social, economic and political ; exploitation ; unemployment ; concentration of most political, economic and knowledge power in the hands of a minority of haves ; and the marginalization of the vast masses of people who are poor and deprived of most good things of life. These are the 'basic problems' which, the Commission argued, will have to be 'squarely faced and resolutely tackled', but unfortunately, they have not been highlighted in the report of the Commission. There are two explanations for this failure to deal adequately with development. Personally, I assume responsibility for not including in the report what little I knew or what was brought out in the discussions within the Commission and in the evidence tendered before it (this did include some good analyses and many excellent suggestions). I must also confess that, at that time, my own knowledge of development was very limited. I became the Member-Secretary of the Indian Council of Social Science Research after I was the Member-Secretary of the Education Commission. I wish it had been the other way round. Moreover, there were no social scientists on the Commission, which hindsight shows to have been a grievous error. I do not think that any educational planning worth the name is possible without substantial inputs from the social sciences.

(3) Education and society : On the relationship between education and society, also, the position taken by the Commission is not fully tenable. The view of the Commission was that a radical restructuring of education (or the creation of a national system of education as indicated by it) will set in motion corresponding socio-economic changes and that education is an instrument for the peaceful transformation of society. The Commission also believed that "the most effective way of breaking the vicious circle in which we find ourselves is to begin educational reconstruction in a big way" (para. 10.50). As a matter of hindsight, I find that this view is not theoretically correct. It also ignores the basic fact that the existing power structure will do its damndest to see that no radical reconstruction of education contrary to its interest takes place. I have also realized to my regret that such a view does an actual disservice to the cause because people in responsible positions avoid recourse to direct action for social transformation (which may be coercive) on the ground that the same results can be obtained peacefully through education. All things considered, I believe that we must now abandon the role of primacy in social transformation which we have been traditionally ascribing to education for years. It is a hang-over of the pre-independence struggle for national education and has outlived its utility.

What is the alternative ? One view asserts that a socio-economic transformation or revolution should come first and that all the needed educational reconstruction would automatically follow. I have no objection to this, but I do not see the revolution round the corner. As an alternative, the view put forward in Education for our People (★), is the best practical suggestion we can adopt at the moment, until some better formulation becomes available. For ready reference, we quote it below in extenso :

- 2.11 "What is the precise relationship between educational and social transformation ? The most commonly accepted view romanticizes the relationship and argues that we must begin with a radical transformation in education which, in its turn, will bring about a radical transformation in society. On the other hand, there is also a view that the social structure will always be reflected within the education system which it dominates so that no worthwhile education reform is possible unless a social revolution is first brought about. The truth is probably neither so simple nor so direct. The educational system has a duty to make a critical analysis of the social system, to focus attention on its internal contradictions and on the gap between slogans and practice, and to highlight the need for structural changes, where necessary, including those needed within the educational system itself. Education can thus play a useful role in promoting the desire for a radical social change and also help in deciding the nature of such change as well as the manner of bringing it about. Similarly, education is essential to complete and consolidate a social change decided and implemented through political means, whether by bullets or by ballot. The education system can also remedy social deficiencies which are due to educational factors. But it can have little effect on social deficiencies which arise elsewhere, say, in the economic or political sub-systems. We must also remember that, while it is comparatively easy to introduce educational reforms that support the existing social structure, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to implement radical educational reforms which threaten the existing social structure or run counter to its imperatives. All things considered, it appears that, if we desire to get out of this vicious circle wherein an inegalitarian society creates an inegalitarian educational system and vice-versa, we must mount a big offensive on both social and educational fronts.
- 2.12 The major implications of this proposal, for both social and educational reforms, can be briefly indicated -
- (1) in society, the basic minimum change required is to narrow down the existing wide gap between the life-styles and standards of living of the upper and middle classes and the common people, by,
- eliminating or at least minimizing all direct and indirect forms of exploitation ;

(★) Education for our People : a policy frame, for the development of education (1978-87), Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1978.

- imposing limits and curbs on the consumption of the rich and the well-to-do through a modification of the existing arbitrary and inequalitarian wage-structure and other allied measures ;
- ensuring a basic minimum standard of living to the people through (a) an emphasis on increased production of goods and services needed by the common man, (b) a guarantee of employment at a reasonable wage to all able-bodied persons who are willing to work, and (c) the organization of an efficient and nation-wide public distribution system of food-stuffs and other essential commodities.

An important implication of this policy will be to reduce the wide gulf between urban and rural areas and to improve the standards of living of the rural people, especially of agricultural labour and small and marginal farmers.

(2) In education, the corresponding basic minimum change required is to make common people, rather than the upper and middle classes, the principal beneficiaries of the educational system. This will imply among other things,

- giving the highest priority to the programmes for the education of the common people such as adult education (including liquidation of illiteracy, non-formal education of out-of-school youth) and universal elementary education (including the adoption of the common school system) ;
- utilizing the bulk of resources available for programmes for the education of the people so that they, and not secondary and higher education, receive the larger share of total educational expenditure ;
- changing the basic values underlying the system and orienting them to common people instead of to the upper and middle classes
- adopting the regional languages as media of instruction at all stages ;
- transforming the content of education to suit the ethos of work and production and the imperatives of national development ;
- improving the access of students from economically handicapped groups to secondary and higher education and taking suitable measures for optimizing their performance ;
- eliminating or reducing the subsidies in secondary and higher education that now go to the upper and middle classes ;
- increasing financial support to deserving students from deprived social groups ; and
- restructuring educational administration on the basis of decentralization of decision-making authority so that the common people are actively involved in planning and implementation of their own educational programmes."

A major reason for our failure to bring about a radical reconstruction of the educational system in the past has been the fact that we have ignored the close relationship between social and educational transformation and the consequent need for a simultaneous effort on both the fronts. The most significant aspect of our future strategy of educational development should be, therefore, to plan and implement a radical, simultaneous and complementary programme of social and educational reform.

It was stated earlier that, for better educational planning and creation of a national system of education, an intensive study of the Indian tradition is called for. To this, we may add three other areas : (1) the nature of development ; (2) the future society we should strive to create in the country and (3) the relationship between education and development. A continuing study of these three problems is fundamental to the evolution of a proper national system of education. These studies are necessarily inter-disciplinary, and they need a dedicated band of natural and social scientists and philosophers interested in education and an equally dedicated band of educationists who can rise above mere pedagogy and develop wider visions of philosophy and natural and social sciences. To create these bands of workers and to develop these studies becomes, therefore, a task of the highest priority and significance.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONTINUING EDUCATIONAL CRISIS

In the preceding chapters, we discussed what happened to some of the more important recommendations of the Education Commission. In the present chapter, we shall consider the over-all educational development in the country during the last twelve years. This will give us some idea of the impact of the report of the Commission on the education system as a whole.

General observations

The period of twelve years between 1965-66 to 1977-78 falls naturally within three sub-periods : (1) the three annual plan years (1966-68) ; (2) the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1969-74) ; and (3) the truncated Fifth Plan which consisted of four years only (1974-78).

As compared with the earlier period of fifteen years (1950-51 to 1965-66) or the first three five-year plans, the post-Commission period of twelve years shows several interesting variations and common features :

- Expansion of educational facilities at all stages was the principal feature of the first three plans. It also continued to be the dominating feature of the post-Commission period inspite of its plea for according higher priority to programmes of transformation and qualitative improvement.
- The development of secondary and university education (with special emphasis on agricultural, technical and medical education) was accorded high priority in the educational development in the first three plans. This priority continued to dominate the scene even in the post-Commission period, inspite of the lip-service paid to mass education.
- The goal of universalizing elementary education for children in the age-group 6-14 is being pursued since 1950-51. As may be readily seen, the progress was comparatively easy in the first three plans when we were working at lower levels of enrolment and costs were comparatively low. In the post-Commission period, the problem has become more difficult because of rising costs and because we are now working at higher levels of enrolments where further progress becomes exponentially difficult.
- The tensions within the education system remained under reasonable control in the first two plans (1950-51 to 1961-62), but since the third plan, they have come to the surface and have assumed an increasingly acute form which has led, during the last seventeen years, to continued disturbances in the system, especially at the university stage. This has made the task of educational reconstruction more difficult and complicated.
- The successful implementation of programmes of educational development needs two essential conditions : (1) a strong political authority to take and implement decisions, as well as favourable social and economic conditions ; and (2) large investment of financial resources. As stated earlier, both these factors were more favourable in the first three plans when we really spent our time in dealing with less important issues. In the post-Commission period, we have tried and are still trying to face up to some of our fundamental problems which need a far stronger political will, a much larger social support, and a far larger investment of funds. Unfortunately, we do not have even the same political, economic and social support that we had in the first two or three plans.

The over-all picture of educational developments between 1965-66 and 1977-78 is thus one of a growing gap between the big challenges which are becoming increasingly complex while our attempts to deal with them are proving to be increasingly inadequate.

With these few broad observations, let us survey quickly the major developments in the different sectors of education, from the pre-school stage to the university.

Pre-school education

Pre-school education has been a comparatively neglected sector of education. The Education Commission (1964-66) was the first to discuss the issue and support the idea that the State should accept a limited responsibility for pre-school education, especially among the under-privileged groups (paras. 7.03 to 7.07). This is one of these recommendations with which everyone agrees but about which no one does anything special. Hence pre-school education has developed, both before and after 1965-66, in response to market forces rather than to planned action. The principal demand for it has come from the urban, upper and middle classes for which it has become either a prestige symbol or a necessity (because of women working outside the home). The following data shows its progress during the period under review.

Table 2 : Development of pre-school education

	1965-66	1975-76
Number of pre-schools	3,265	5,658
Number of teachers	6,832	9,951
Number of pupils	262,073	569,296
Expenditure (in million rupees)	11.4	33.0

These officially published statistics of the Ministry of Education do not include the data about unrecognized pre-schools (the most numerous category) and also about Balwadis conducted by the Department of Social Welfare. Even if due allowance is made for all such omissions, pre-school education was available to only about one million children (about 2 per cent of the total population in the age-group 3-6) in 1971. The position has not altered materially since then, and the target suggested by the Commission that we should provide pre-school education to five per cent of the children by 1985-86 is still a far cry.

As the Education Commission had not gone into sufficient details nor prepared a realistic blue-print for action, the Central Advisory Board of Education appointed a "Study Group on the Development of the Pre-School Child", to examine the issue from all points of view and to prepare a ten-year plan of action (1971-81). Its report is still the best document available on the subject, and its proposals can easily provide the guidance needed for the development of pre-school education in the years ahead (1981-2000).

Elementary education

Article 45 of the Constitution states that free and compulsory education should be provided for all children till they complete the age of 14 years. Since then, we have been trying to reach the goal, and our principal method of achieving it is two-fold : (1) we are trying to establish primary and middle schools in all areas so that an elementary school becomes available to every child within easy distance from home ; and (2) we are trying to enrol every child in schools so that the total enrolments in classes I - V would be about 110 per cent of the children in the age-group of 6-11 (to allow for over-age and under-age children admitted to these classes) and those in classes VI - VIII would be about 90 per cent of the children in the age-group 11 - 14. This is of course a purely statistical approach which is unsatisfactory because it ignores the qualitative aspects altogether, but that is all that we have been doing.

The following table shows the number of primary and middle schools during the period under review.

Table 3 : Expansion of primary and middle schools

Year	Number of	
	Primary schools (classes I - V)	Middle schools (classes VI - VIII)
1950-51	209,641	13,596
1965-66	391,064	75,798
1975-76	454,270	106,571
1977-78 (estimate)	477,037	--

The needs of additional primary and middle schools were ascertained through specially conducted educational surveys in 1957, 1965, and 1973. A quick survey for the same purpose is also being attempted during 1979. The rough estimate is that we may need about 600,000 primary schools and about 200,000 middle schools to reach the goal of universal provision. The rate of establishment of new schools has obviously slackened in the post-commission period, but inspite of the long distance we have yet to travel, it is not beyond us, if we make the effort to reach the targets in a period of five years or so from now. The Sixth Five-Year Plan has fought shy on the target and one is not quite sure whether we will reach it even by 1985-86.

The data relating to enrolments in classes I - V, i.e. children in the age-group 6 - 11, is given in the following table :

Table 4 : Enrolments in classes I-V (in millions)

	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	13.77 (60.6)★	5.39 (24.8)	19.16 (43.1)
1965-66	32.18 (96.3)	18.29 (36.5)	50.47 (76.4)
1975-76	40.65 (100.4)	25.01 (66.1)	65.66 (83.8)
1977-78 (Estimates)	43.20 (99.3)	26.95 (65.4)	70.15 (82.8)

★ N.B. - Figures in parentheses indicate percentages of the total population in the age-group 6-11 enrolled.

It will be seen that, between 1950-51 and 1965-66, enrolments in classes I - V increased at an average of two million per year. Inspite of all the talk and debates on the subject **since the report of the Commission**, subsequently enrolments at this stage have increased only by about 1.6 million a year, a level of performance which is even lower than that **between 1950-51 and 1965-66**. **We have run very hard indeed not even to keep where we are, but to fall a little behind.**

The position of enrolments in classes VI - VIII is also somewhat similar. This is given in the following table :

Table 5 : Enrolments in classes VI - VIII (in millions)

	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	2.59 (20.6)★	0.53 (4.6)	3.12 (12.9)
1965-66	7.68 (44.2)	2.85 (17.6)	10.53 (30.8)
1975-76	10.99 (43.6)	5.03 (23.9)	16.02 (36.7)
1977-78	12.03 (49.7)	5.73 (25.3)	17.76 (37.9)

★ N.B. - Figures in parentheses show the percentages of the population in the age-group 11 - 14 enrolled.

In contrast with the position at the primary stage, the enrolments in classes VI-VIII in the post-Commission period (1966-78) are slightly larger than those in the first three plans, but the journey we have yet to complete is very long. What is worse, the additional enrolments in these classes in some areas are not even keeping pace with the growth of population. One must also note that this game of enrolments does not always tell the truth. Bogus and inflated enrolments have become a routine, and these unfortunately are the highest in the backward states.

It is obvious however that mere targets of enrolments in classes I - VIII do not tell the whole story. The following related facts also deserve to be noted.

- (1) The rates of wastage are very high : out of every 100 children enrolled in class I, only about 50 reach class V and only about 25 reach class VIII. These rates have remained almost constant since 1950.
- (2) The expenditure on elementary education increased from Rs.230 million (or 34 per cent of total educational expenditure) in 1965-66 to Rs.7,873 million (or 37 per cent of the total). The very large increase in absolute figures is due mainly to rises in prices and upgrading of salaries of teachers, but it is also evident that the low priority accorded to elementary education in 1965-66 (or as a matter of fact throughout the post-independence period) continues unchanged to this day.
- (3) The qualitative aspects of the problem shows marked deterioration. In many schools, the teachers' salaries constitute about 98 per cent of the total expenditure. The condition of the school plant has deteriorated, and even academic achievements of students show a trend towards decline.
- (4) The revised enrolment targets for the Sixth Plan show that it will not be possible to make elementary education universal even at the end of the Seventh Plan, i.e. 1987-88.

How does one compare the situation of elementary education in 1977-78 with that in 1965-66 ? In 1965-66, the total estimated population of children in the age-group 6 - 14 was 90 million, of whom 61 million were enrolled and 39 million were not attending. In 1977-78, the total population of children in the age-group 6 - 14 was estimated to be 131.50 million, of whom 87.91 million are enrolled and 43.59 million are not attending. In other words, the children out of school in 1977-78 are more numerous than those in 1965-66 showing that, as a country, our additional enrolments at the elementary stage in the post-Commission period are not keeping pace even with the growth of population : If the increases in costs and deterioration in standards are also taken into account, it is obvious that the task of reaching the goal of universal elementary education **has become more difficult in 1977-78 than it was in 1965-66.** The crisis of non-performance in elementary education which has persisted throughout the post-independence period has only deepened over the last 12 years.

Adult education

The same can be said of adult education as well. In spite of all the plans made by the Education Commission, the programme of adult education has continued to be neglected during the last 12 years. During this period, there has also been a rise in the total number of illiterates in the country. This is yet another example of a continuing crisis of non-performance in the post-independence period.

Secondary education

(1) Institutions

The number of general secondary schools increased from 7,288 in 1950-51 to 27,477 in 1965-66, to 43,054 in 1975-76 and to 44,579 in 1977-78. The Education Commission made several recommendations regarding control over the unplanned expansion of secondary schools. By and large, these have produced little effect, so that the average annual increase in secondary schools in the post-commission period is larger than that prior to 1965-66. During the recent years, however, the state governments have been unwilling, on financial grounds, to give permission to start new secondary schools. This has slowed down expansion to some extent.

(2) Enrolments

Enrolments in general secondary education in classes IX-XII (and corresponding to the age-group 14-18) have also shown a rapid increase in keeping with the earlier policies of providing access to all students who desire to join secondary schools - policies which have continued to dominate the scene in spite of suggestions of the Commission to the contrary. The details are given in the following table :

Table 6 : Enrolments in classes IX - XII (in millions)

	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	1.62 (8.7)★	0.2 (1.8)	1.22 (5.3)
1965-66	3.87 (24.3)	1.17 (7.7)	5.64 (16.2)
1975-76	5.34 (25.6)	2.08 (10.5)	7.42 (18.3)
1977-78	6.50 ()	2.65 ()	9.15 ()

★ N.B. - Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of population in the age-group 14-18 enrolled.

I will be noticed that there is no marked difference in the expansion of enrolments in secondary level institutions in the fifteen years before the Education Commission and the twelve years after it. There is of course a sharp increase in the period between 1975-76 and 1977-78, due mainly to the adoption of the new 10 + 2 + 3 pattern, but this represents more an adjustment than a real increase. The obvious implication is that all the discussions about expansion of secondary education and its restrictions have had no major impact on the over-all enrolment situation in secondary education which continues to be more or less what it was before 1965-66.

(3) Expenditure

The expenditure on secondary education increased from Rs. 1,377 million in 1965-66 (or 22.2 per cent of the total educational expenditure) to Rs. 4,936 million (or 23.5 per cent of the total expenditure), which implies that its over-all priority also did not change to any significant extent.

(4) Vocational secondary education

Coming to the provision of vocational education at the secondary level, one finds that the progress has been disappointing. Owing to the failure to promote industry in a big way, there were no increasing opportunities for employment at the middle level in industry. Opportunities for employment in other sectors also did not show any rapid increase. On the whole, the employment profile remained in a low key so that vocational secondary education also showed a recession. The following table shows the position of vocational secondary education between 1965-66 and 1975-76.

Table 7 : Expansion of vocational secondary education

	1965-66	1975-76
1. Number of schools	2,775	2,496
2. Enrolments	293,444	224,210
3. Expenditure (in million rupees)	76.61	132.25
4. Proportion of this expenditure to total educational expenditure (%)	12	6.4

A word of explanation is needed. Owing to a change in the classification system of educational statistics adopted during this period, the figures for 1975-76 are not strictly comparable to those of 1965-66. For example, polytechnics which were shown as vocational education of secondary level in 1965-66 are now classified as vocational educational education of the collegiate standard. Even after due allowance is made for these changes, it is still found that the increase in secondary vocational education between 1965-66 and 1975-76 is marginal. At any rate, there is hardly any increase in the proportion of students at the secondary level diverted to the vocational courses. This is of course a sad comment on all the debate on vocationalization of secondary education that has gone on in the country during the last 12 years.

How does the over-all situation in secondary education in 1977-78 compare with that in 1965-66 and what difference did the report of the Education Commission make to this over-all situation ?

(a) Perhaps the main contribution of the Education Commission to secondary education was to undo the damage which had been done by the concept of the multi-purpose secondary school adopted after the report of the secondary Education Commission (1952). Under this concept, secondary education was 'streamed' into Arts, Sciences, Engineering, Agriculture, etc., and a student was called upon to decide his future career at the end of class VIII, that is at the age of 12 or 13. Dr. D.S. Kothari said that this was as bad as child-marriage. All this has now ceased to be, and this attempt at a premature specialization has come to an end.

(b) On the positive side, the adoption of the new pattern of 10 + 2 + 3 has strengthened secondary education, especially where classes XI - XII have been added to schools.

(c) The Commission's proposals of an undifferentiated course of general education at the lower secondary stage has run into problems. Two criticisms levelled against the courses designed to implement these recommendations were that they create too much uniformity to suit all talents and that the information load on students is unbearable. This was not, of course, the fault of the Commission. These issues were examined by the Ishwarbhai Patel Committee, which simplified the curricula to some extent and also introduced some options or alternative courses.

(d) A Major comment on the proposals of the Commission concerning the upper secondary stage has been that the proposed reform does not go far enough. After all is said and done, the Commission has recommended only two streams : an academic stream (still based on the old grammar school model) for those who would like to go to the university and terminal vocational courses for the others. It is contended that we should have a still greater diversity in the curricula and evolve something like a comprehensive secondary school in the U.K. The need for this will increase as secondary education expands and eventually lower secondary education becomes universal.

(e) The Commission has not paid adequate attention to the problem of relevance. What is the precise use of the existing secondary education to those who do not go to a college ? Is the existing secondary education relevant for our rural areas ? This, it is contended, is the most crucial problem on which the Commission has little light to throw.

(f) The problem of improving standards in secondary education is extremely important, especially in the small rural schools. In this case also, the Commission does not provide adequate guidance.

The basic issues remain mostly unsolved. Secondary education in India has suffered from a number of weaknesses : a rapid and uncontrolled expansion and the creation of small, uneconomic, non-viable institutions (more than 50 per cent of the secondary schools have small enrolments of less than 250), poor standards, lack of diversification (i.e. more than 90 per cent of the students take up only the academic courses leading to the university), absence of terminal vocational courses on an adequate scale, and above all, lack of relevance. The report of the Commission did not make any meaningful dent on these issues to which the educational planner of tomorrow will have to address himself.

Higher education

The post-independence period may be described literally as the 'era of higher education' in Indian educational history. The elite that came to power in 1947 was hungry for more and better higher education of which it had been starved in the pre-independence period and which alone gave it what it desired most, viz., recognition in the international world. It was also convinced that the future of the Indian society depends upon the universities, symbolized best in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's observation : "A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people". Throughout the last thirty years, higher education has received the highest priority, the best attention and proportionately larger allocation of funds. It is also the one sector of education which has expanded most.

But this is not all the story. The ruling elite also decided that higher education will continue to be, as it was in 1947, the almost exclusive preserve of the upper and middle classes who would use it mainly for perpetuating and strengthening their privileged status and for providing some vertical mobility to the underprivileged groups with a view to legitimizing it. Higher education thus became the selective mechanism par excellence to determine who should or should not be admitted into the elite status, and without it, one could not hope to get any meaningful job or a privileged position of self-employment. This created very fierce competition to get access to higher education, and it would have been socially explosive to deny anyone an entry into this 'lottery' pool. Hence the insistence on an open-door policy which necessarily led to uncontrolled expansion and consequent dilution of standards. This is why the powers that be evolved the dual policy of maintaining a core, high quality sector of higher education, which continued to be the almost exclusive preserve of the elite, and surrounding it with a 'red light district' of poor quality institutions, in which everyone was welcome to fish and to take his chances.

Obviously, a system like this cannot go on indefinitely without accumulating the tensions which are inherent in it. These began to come to the surface by 1960 and increased as the distance between the job and the degree became longer. Student unrest, which was the main symptom of this deep-seated malaise, increased in all areas, became almost endemic in some, and everywhere made the situation worse by disrupting the system and reducing the standards still further. Politicians, some of whom fished in troubled waters in order to be able to fish, soon joined the fray and, in their characteristic style, made the problem more complex and intractable. The net result of these developments was to create a first rate crisis in the system of higher education : a crisis which converted it from "a pursuit of truth and excellence" into "a fire-fighting operation".

We must judge the developments of the period under study mainly with a view to determining the extent to which the report of the Education Commission has helped us to resolve this crisis. Before 1965-66, the policy was to provide admission to every student who completed secondary education and desired to study further. The Education Commission recommended selective admissions and regulation of enrolments in higher education. These proposals were rejected, and the old policy of open-door access has continued, although the state governments are now less anxious to expand higher education, except in backward areas, on account of financial stringency. Consequently, higher education continued to expand during most of the period under review and has only been checked slightly in recent

years. The following data tell the story.

Table 8 : Institutions of higher education

	1950-51	1965-66	1975-76
1. Universities and equivalent institutions	27	80	119
2. Research institutes	18	39	47
3. Colleges of general education	498	1,673	3,667
4. Colleges of professional education	222	770	3,270 *
5. Other colleges	78	1,253	1,405
Total	843	3,815	8,508

* Increase largely due to a change in classification, viz., institutions of vocational secondary education where the minimum admission qualification is class ten (e.g. polytechnics) are now included in this category.

Table 9 : Enrolments in higher education

	1965-66	1975-76
1. Research	6,851	13,898
2. Post-graduate	71,821	180,257
3. Undergraduate	625,907	1,408,744
4. Intermediate (pre-university)	623,642	1,504,829
5. Post-secondary diploma	2,970	5,350
6. Professional education (college standard)	738,120	1,462,118
Total	2,069,311	4,575,196

Table 10 : Teachers in higher education

	1965-66	1975-76
1. Universities and equivalent institutions	9,271	18,981
2. Research institutes	389	815
3. Colleges of general education	58,057	128,082
4. Colleges of professional education	53,972	78,954
5. Other colleges	6,675	8,990
Total	128,364	235,822

Table 11 : Expenditure on higher education
(in millions of rupees)

	1965-66	1975-76
1. a) Universities	320.54	995.64
b) Deemed universities	31.61	124.52
c) Institutes of national importance	37.35	222.48
2. Research institutes	18.23	36.07
3. Colleges of general education	383.36	1,756.38
4. Colleges of professional education	466.55	1,508.33
5. Other colleges	12.13	31.04
Total	1,269.77	4,674.46

N.B. - The total expenditure on higher education, as a proportion of total educational expenditure was 20 % in 1965-66 and 22 % in 1975-76.

It will thus be seen that, throughout the period under review, the basic policies adopted early in the post-independence period continued to hold sway with some minor modifications. Among the good things done, one may refer to the revision of the salaries of teachers, the programme of qualitative improvement promoted by the UGC, the advancement of research in various fields and especially in the social sciences, the attempt to adopt the regional languages as media of instruction, the increase in scholarships, certain revisions of curricula, the extension of the semester systems, some attempts at examination reform, and so on. However, these mostly marginal exercises did little to change the over-all situation in higher education.

It would be sufficient to sum up by saying that the main problems we have been facing in secondary education are : How do we reconcile its two objectives of preparing students for the university and also providing them with terminal courses of a practical, vocational type ? How do we introduce diversity to suit all talents without creating water-tight and irrevocable streams ? How do we make secondary education relevant, especially to those who do not proceed to the university ? How do we improve standards ? How do we solve the complex organizational problems, especially in the smaller schools, which will be the norm in rural areas ? It is the failure to solve these problems that has made secondary education the weakest link in the chain. Even the Education Commission has not given enough guidance to solve these problems whose complexity and difficulty will increase in the days ahead with growth of the system, and this is therefore an area in which a good deal of fresh thinking, research and experimentation is called for.

The report of the Education Commission makes a good contribution when it discusses the objectives of the university system and the role that the universities have to play in national development. It also presents a grand vision of the university as a community of scholars engaged in the pursuit of truth and excellence, and most of its recommendations are meant to create this model. Its insistence on making the remuneration of university and college teachers comparable to that of other major public services, so that a reasonable proportion of the country's top talent goes into the university system, was absolutely right. Its proposals to make the affiliated colleges, academically and financially viable and to confer autonomy on them were sound, but probably not adequate to meet the situation. It did a yeoman service to the adoption of regional languages as media of instruction, although all its proposals on the subject have yet to be fully worked out. The introduction of the national social service, though in a truncated form, was a corollary of one of its recommendations.

This is probably all that can be said in favour of the report. Its recommendations for improving selection procedures and raising the quality of teachers have not been implemented, nor has its proposal of selective admission been accepted as yet. This should of course be blamed on implementation rather than on the Commission. However, it can also be said that the inadequacies of the proposals of the Education Commission on the reform of higher education have been too significant to be ignored. What is probably worse, it does not present any deep analysis of the factors which are responsible for the continuing crisis in which the system finds itself and it does not therefore make adequate proposals to resolve it. It also ignores the imperative need, which will become more urgent as time passes, to diversify higher education and to create a variety of models among which the classical model (on which the Commission relies almost exclusively) can be one. This subject therefore also finds hardly any treatment in the report of the Commission.

One also cannot help feeling that the proposals of the Commission were not radical enough and did not address themselves to the fundamental weakness of the system which, in their turn, are again related to the fundamental weaknesses in society itself. Even if all the recommendations of the Commission were implemented, the basic contradictions and tensions within the system would still have remained. They can only be cured through a simultaneous attempt to alter society and the system of higher education. This was of course not on the agenda. It is therefore, hardly a matter of surprise if the crisis in higher education still continues : over-production of 'educated' persons ; increasing levels of educated unemployment ; weakening of student motivation ; increasing unrest and indiscipline on the campuses ; frequent collapses of administration ; deterioration of standards ; and above all, the demoralizing effect of the irrelevance and purposelessness of most of what is being done.

Enrolment targets

Even since 1947, the highest emphasis in educational development has been on a linear expansion of the educational system as we inherited it in 1947. This implies a certain attitude which needs a categorical statement, viz., that the existing system of education is basically good, that the first responsibility of government is to expand it and provide access to it to an increasing number of people, and that all ideas of reforming and transforming the system can be pursued side by side to the extent possible. It is for this reason that the hard core of all the five-year plans approved so far consists of enrolment targets for children in the age-group 6-11, 11-14, 14-17, and 17-23 corresponding to the primary, middle, secondary and university levels respectively. It is again for the same reason that the largest part of the plan allocations is devoted to the realization of the enrolment targets. As was pointed out earlier, the Education Commission has not been able to make any change in this policy, and all its plans to accord a higher priority to programmes of qualitative improvement of transformation have fallen on deaf years so far.

It is of course necessary to note that this game of enrolment target has some relevance at the elementary level where we are expected to provide universal education to children in the age-group 6-14. Consequently the plans try to raise as high as possible the targets of enrolment at the primary and middle school stages. On the other hand, there is no such definite target at the secondary and university levels. Here the enrolments basically depend upon (1) the extent to which pressures rise up from below (i.e. the number of persons who complete the elementary level and desire to proceed to the second level or the number of those who complete the second level and desire to proceed to higher education) and (2) the facilities provided for secondary and higher education (i.e. the number of new secondary schools and colleges opened, their dispersal in various parts of the country, and the number of students they are allowed to enrol). Since the principle of selective admissions has not been accepted, since open-door access prevails, and since the state governments are anxious to see that educational facilities are made available to all those who desire such education, the targets of enrolment in secondary and higher education really mean the minimum expansion of secondary and higher education that will be needed to meet the public demand for it. Of course, our experience has always been that the targets fixed for primary and middle school education generally prove to be ambitious (leading to shortfalls in achievement), while those in secondary and higher education generally prove to be under-estimates so that we compliment ourselves on over-shooting them. Naturally, the failure in achieving the first group of targets, i.e. in primary and middle school education (where the enrolments need to be stepped up), is as bad as the success in over-reaching the targets in secondary and higher education (where they need to be kept down).

Equalization of educational opportunities

Since equalization of educational opportunities through expansion of facilities has been the principal programme of educational development in the post-independence period, it is necessary to see how far this succeeded, especially after 1965-66.

Equalization of educational opportunities has three aspects : quantitative, social and qualitative. On the quantitative side, the most important programme of equalization is the provision of universal elementary education. As was pointed out earlier, only a limited progress was made in this field. The wide gap between advanced states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, on the one hand, and backward states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan continued to persist. In fact, as the advanced states made considerable progress and came nearer the goal of universal education, the total concentration of non-attending children in the backward states increased. Today, the eight backward states in education contain 74 per cent of all the non-attending children in the country. Similar wide gaps continue to persist between advanced and backward districts.

On the social side, the education of girls has continued to progress at a faster rate than that of boys throughout the post-independence period. The gap between the education of boys and girls at all stages had therefore decreased considerably between 1947 and 1965 ; it decreased still further between 1965 and 1977. The following table gives the details.

Table 12 : Education of girls

	Number of girls enrolled for every 100 boys		
	1950-51	1956-66	1975-76
1. Primary schools	38	55	60
2. Middle schools	23	52	56
3. Secondary schools	16	31	41
4. Universities	9	18	25
5. Colleges of general education	12	25	26
6. Colleges of professional education	9	12	16

Among the scheduled castes and tribes, the progress of education at all stages continued to be rapid and maintained the trends set up between 1947 and 1965.

The following table shows the progress of scheduled castes and tribes in higher education.

Table 13 : Higher education enrolment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes

	1965-66		1975-76	
	scheduled castes	scheduled tribes	scheduled castes	scheduled tribes
1. Intermediate (pre-university)	42,200	5,317	133,090	28,781
2. Undergraduate	29,000	8,227	102,865	21,830
3. Post-graduate	2,650	397	11,251	2,397
4. Professional	31,800	5,659	88,757	22,369
5. Other education	600	300	869	265
Total	106,250	19,000	336,032	75,642

In 1965-66, the total number of post-matric scholarships awarded to scheduled castes was 78,548 (at a cost of Rs. 37 million) and that to scheduled tribes was 15,925 (at a cost of Rs. 7 million). In 1975-76, the scheduled castes were given 282,100 scholarships at a cost of Rs. 243 million and the scheduled tribes were given 54,255 scholarships at a cost of Rs. 46.7 million.

On the whole therefore, the education of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes may be said to have made satisfactory progress during the period under review. The problems that continued to cause concern were :

- The progress was not uniform among all the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The dominant among them availed themselves of the facilities to a much greater extent than the others, so that a special effort was needed to reach the more backward amongst them.
- The qualitative aspects remained less satisfactory. The wastage rates among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes were generally higher, and their achievements were generally lower. Thus, in spite of this expansion in enrolments, it was not always possible to find suitable candidates for the reserved superior posts in government service.
- The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students do not yet have adequate access to quality and prestigious institutions. Reservation and continued special efforts seem to be called for.

One unhappy development of this period was the growing tensions between the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and certain other castes which are almost equally poor but which do not have either the educational support which the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes get or **their reservations** in government service. It was admitted that both these groups have fairly comparable economic handicaps while the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have social handicaps in addition, and what is even more important, a handicap of centuries of deprivation and neglect. While this made out a case for some special treatment to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, it was argued that it was not fair totally to refuse both educational support and reservations to the poor people and backward castes, other than the scheduled castes and tribes. A movement has therefore begun which demands that the same principles of educational support and reservation (which are now applied to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes) should be applied to all poor people and other backward castes. Another form of the demand is that both educational support and reservations should be extended to all economically handicapped persons irrespective of caste or birth. This is one of the major problems that will have to be tackled in the years ahead.

The equalization of educational opportunities has a qualitative aspect also. The Education Commission referred to the segregation that takes place at school between the children of the privileged classes (who go to good quality and prestigious private schools) and of the under-privileged people (who go to the publicly maintained, poor quality schools). It is also drew attention to a similar phenomenon at the university level where the privileged use a core of high quality institutions while the under-privileged use the penumbra of institutions with low standards. No attempt was made to remedy either of these evils.

Qualitative improvement

Unfortunately, educational data in India is collected annually on the basis of indicators of inputs only, e.g. number of schools, enrolments, number of teachers, provision of buildings and equipment, expenditure on supervision, etc. No indicators of input can give an idea of qualitative improvement : these need a study of outputs, which are not available, except the results of certain examinations. There is thus very little empirical data to show whether standards in the educational systems are improving or otherwise. This will have to be indirectly inferred from certain data about inputs, from subjective impressions and from special studies, which are very few. Some broad observations that can be made in this context are the following :

- In all planning **exercises** and at the administrative level, expansion continued to be the first priority ; even conceptually, programmes of qualitative improvement were ranked lower.
- An increasing proportion of the total allocation of funds available was used for programmes of **expansion**, so that very little money was left for programmes of qualitative improvement. Even our idea that a certain minimum allocation (say, 20 to 30 per cent) should be reserved for programmes of quality could not be accepted.
- However, where a limit on expansion was accepted, qualitative programmes received priority and attention. For instance, in technical education, all expansion was practically stopped on account of increased unemployment. During the period under review, an intensive and sustained effort was made to improve quality in technical education.

The shortage of available resources and increases in costs (including a rise in teachers' salaries) created a situation where the vast bulk of expenditure consisted mainly of salaries. At the primary level, for instance, the expenditure on teachers' salaries, which ought to be about 70 per cent of the total, rose to somewhere between 90 and 98 per cent. The investment in buildings and equipment was drastically reduced.

Between 1947 and 1965, the established trend was that while the selected schools increased in number, expanded their enrolments, and maintained or improved their standards, the common run of schools showed a deterioration of standards because their resources were curtailed when their enrolments were rapidly expanding. This trend continued unchanged during the period under review, also.

A typical characteristic of the Indian situation is that there is a fair number of good teachers and good schools who are continuously striving to improve standards, but these remain ad hoc, sporadic, individual, and do not add up to a major drive for qualitative improvement as such. The Education Commission suggested that the problem of low standards is so serious that nothing less than a nation-wide movement for qualitative improvement would suffice. As stated already, this recommendation was not accepted. The crisis in qualitative aspects of education may thus be said to have continued throughout this period.

Finance

Throughout the post-independence period, educational planning in India has had a pronounced 'expenditure orientation'. That is to say, an educational plan became practically a statement showing how much money was available and how it was proposed to be spent. The unwritten assumptions in this were : there is no educational problem which more money cannot solve ; a bigger plan is necessarily a better plan ; and programmes that need less or no money are not that important and can be ignored. These are dangerous assumptions for planning education in a poor country, and many of our problems can be traced to this wrong orientation.

In the existing system of educational planning, no account is taken of the level of educational expenditure reached at the end of the earlier plan. This is called the maintenance of 'non-plan' expenditure in which there is no manoeuvrability. In fact, this expenditure is very large, and increases rapidly from plan to plan. It would be wrong to ignore it altogether for purposes of development, but this is the current practice. What we take into consideration is only the 'plan' or 'developmental' expenditure which is unencumbered and can be used to bring about changes or reforms. The following table gives the position of plan expenditure since independence.

Table 14 : "Plan" allocation for education (in millions of rupees)

	Fourth Plan 1969-70 to 1973-74	Fifth Plan 1974-75 to 1977-78	Sixth Plan 1978-79 to 1982-83
1. Elementary education	2347 (28.5)★	3170 (35)	9000 (46)
2. Secondary education	1183 (14.4)	1560 (17)	3000 (15)
3. University education	1835 (22.3)	2050 (22)	2650 (14)
4. Teacher training	212 (2.6)	-	-
5. Adult education	83 (1.0)	90 (1)	2000 (10)
6. Other programmes	1188 (14.5)	900 (10)	900 (5)
7. Cultural programmes	125 (1.05)	280 (3)	500 (3)
<u>Total general education</u>	6973 (84.8)	8050 (88)	18050 (93)
8. Technical education	1254 (15.2)	1070 (12)	1500 (7)
<u>TOTAL education</u>	8227 (100)	9120 (100)	19550 (100)

★ Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage to the total plan allocation.

It will be seen that the financial outlays on education during the period under review were meagre. They could not achieve much by themselves, and no attempts were made to make up for the financial shortfalls through human effort.

The Education Commission recommended that the investment in education should reach six per cent of the national income by 1985-86. The government of India accepted this view, which has been embodied in the National Policy on Education (1968). During this period under review, the total educational expenditure increased from Rs 6270 million in 1965-66 (or 2.9 per cent of the national income) to Rs. 21407 million in 1975-76 (or 3.0 per cent of the national income) Comments are needless.

An overview

India has made a considerable effort to improve its educational system in the post-independence period, and if one compares the position in 1950-51 with that in 1977-78, one can certainly see progress - and commendable progress at that - on several fronts. This observation is subject to two reservations : The first is that in every plan, the achievements have fallen far short of the needs of the situation so that the basic educational crisis has continued ; and the second is that most of the gains of the system have gone to the upper and middle classes, and the education of the people has continued to be neglected. The formal educational system is now a gigantic structure with about 700,000 educational institutions, 100 million students, more than 3.5 million teachers, and an expenditure of about Rs. 25,000 millions, which is next only to that on defence. In spite of all this expansion and all the changes made therein, the educational system still continues to benefit mainly the upper and middle classes for whom it was originally designed. It still makes only a marginal contribution to the education of the people, and especially of the poor people, who have only a limited access to it, both qualitatively and quantitatively. In fact, the total injustice of the system and its unpardonable discrimination against the poor can be highlighted by the following indisputable facts :

- About 60 per cent of the people of age 10 and over are still illiterate and have received none of the benefits of this vast educational system.
- About 20 per cent of the children, never enter the schools at all. They are born poor and continue to be poor, and the formal system of education bypasses them altogether.
- Of those children that enter the schools, nearly half drop out by class V and nearly three-fourths drop out by class VIII ; only about 15 per cent reaches class XII, and less than one per cent get the first university degree.
- As pointed out above, the system accords very low priority to programmes such as adult education, universal elementary education, or non-formal education, which would benefit the masses, especially the poor. On the other hand, it accords high priority and invests the bulk of its resources in secondary and higher education, which benefit mostly the top 30 per cent of the population.
- The children from poor families get an unfair deal in the system whose entire ethos is oriented to the needs and aspirations of the upper and middle classes and which still continues to use English as the medium of instruction in higher education and thereby encourages the use of English as medium in the lower schools, also.

Therefore, it would be incorrect to describe the existing educational system as an instrument for educating the people. The evidence adduced above clearly shows that it is more appropriately designed for not educating them. In fact, the primary objective of the system is not to spread education among the people, but to function as an efficient and merciless mechanism to select individuals who should continue to remain in the privileged sector or enter it afresh. It does not discharge even this task impartially and, as we shall see presently, functions in such a biased fashion that those who are already in the privileged sector find it easier to continue therein, while the underprivileged find that access to the privileged sector through the portals of education is becoming more restricted and increasingly dependent on chance rather than on merit. The main achievement of the system is to condemn the bulk of the children of the common people to be drop-outs and failures and to consign them to a life of drudgery and poverty which has hardly any parallel in the contemporary world or even in our own earlier history. (★)

CHAPTER SIX

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

In the preceding chapters, we briefly reviewed why the Education Commission was appointed (Chapter I), what its main recommendations were (Chapter II), the extent to which these recommendations were implemented (Chapters III and IV), and their over-all effect on the educational system as a whole (Chapter V). In this concluding chapter, we shall address ourselves to one major issue: What has all this experience to teach us about educational reconstruction in the days ahead, between 1981 and 2000 ?

Education and national development

The Education Commission was fully justified in calling its report "Education and National Development", to highlight the interdependence of education and development. It also tried to indicate how Indian education will have to be transformed, improved and expanded to promote national development. As the narrative in the preceding chapters has shown, this attempt has met with only limited success but gives several pointers for making a second and better planned attack on the problem. Some of the important lessons are discussed briefly below :

- (1) The Commission did not give a clear picture of "development", that is the future society we should strive to create in the country and the steps to be taken to create it. This exercise has therefore to be taken up afresh. In fact, it is essential to maintain a nation-wide debate on the subject in the years ahead.
- (2) While the Commission did prepare a fairly good blue-print of the national system of education, its report did not highlight the close links between education and society, nor did it elucidate how the dialectical process of education leads, on the one hand, to a strengthening and perpetuation of the status quo and, on the other, to social change and transformation. The proposals to be framed in the future for the creation of a national system of education will therefore have to be clearly justified with reference to the new society we desire to create.
- (3) A very persistent effort needs to be made to educate all concerned to realize that a radical reconstruction of education and a socio-economic transformation have to go together. Very often people believe that major educational changes can be brought about without attempting corresponding changes in society itself. Such illusions do considerable harm and have to be dispelled.
- (4) There is very little understanding about the price that a society has to pay to create a national system of education. Too frequently, this price is highly underestimated. Very often, people believe that this price is essentially in terms of financial investment, say, six per cent of the national income. It is very essential to educate the people to realize that money is the least of all the different prices that a society has to pay for creating a good educational system. Money is no doubt needed for educational reform, but money alone, whatever its quantum, can never achieve the goal. The more significant prices a society has to pay for education include the investment of thought, of dedication, of sustained hard work by teachers, students, educational administrators and others, of courage to take hard and unpleasant decisions, and above all of willingness to change society itself.
- (5) It needs also to be emphasized that while every citizen and every social group have their own unique roles to play in education, a national system of education cannot be created by any one individual or social group or even by some of them working together. It can be created only when every individual and every social group plays the assigned role.

Of these five valuable lessons, the first two deal with a conceptional clarification of the problems involved and with the preparation of a broad revised outline of a national system of education. We shall consider them first. The last three deal essentially with implementation and will be discussed in a later section.

The future society : ends and means

There are several ways in which the vision of the future society can be presented. We would like to adopt a simple approach to the problem, viz., to state the worst aspects of the existing social order which have to be eliminated as early as possible. This will indicate not only some of the major features of the future society, but also a programme of action. From this point of view, we consider three aspects of the present society as its worst evils.

(1) The first weakness is the elitist character of our society in which all power - political, economic and knowledge - is concentrated in the hands of a small elite which, despite its internal jealousies and quarrels, always keeps a united front vis-à-vis the masses of people who are marginalized and unable to assert themselves or to plan their own destiny. We created this elite structure of our society some centuries ago when all power was vested in the three upper castes (or social groups) : the Brahmins monopolized the power of knowledge, the Kshatriyas monopolized political power, and the Vaishyas monopolized the money power. These three castes were described as twice-born, their second birth being their initiation into the study of the sacred texts to which they alone were entitled. This designation, therefore, shows what united these castes together, as well as what separated them from the vast masses of people, the Shudras, who lived as slaves or workers without any human dignity, and the Antyajas or the outcastes or untouchables, who lived precariously on the social fringe. Our society accepted this unjust organisation, gave it a religious and social sanction, and created a philosophical base which reconciled the masses of people to their marginalized status in society and successfully prevented them from rising in revolt. The advent of Islam did not change this picture materially because the Muslim society itself got divided into the same elite groups. The masses of people and the over-all society continued to present the same elitist model, the Hindu and Muslim elites joining hands, inspite of their internal rivalries, to keep the masses of people - both Hindu and Muslim - suppressed and marginalized.

Even in the modern period, inspite of the introduction of secular and democratic trends and the creation of a Western system of education, the same elitist model is perpetuated. This is because the elite of the pre-modern period who had social status, economic power in the form of ownership of land, trade and industries, and political power in the sense of positions in government and the army, were the first to see the advantages of modernization and get full benefit of the new educational opportunities that were being opened up. This suited the British, also, who saw in them a group of intermediaries and interpreters who might help to stabilize their rule. As education spread to wider sections of society and as secular and democratic forces became increasingly stronger, three main changes occurred in these elite groups : (1) the membership of the group ceased to be almost exclusively based on birth or caste, and several individuals of the non-elite castes were co-opted into elite status through the educational system which, while promoting vertical social mobility, also acted as a great screening device to show who should or should not be so co-opted; (2) the ranks of the elites were considerably increased to accommodate the new arrivals, who far outnumbered those who dropped out for some reason or other; and (3) the elite system was legitimized on grounds of 'merit' and was no longer in need of any explanation in terms of previous births or karma.

In the Indian society of today, therefore, the ruling elite consists of the top 20-30 per cent of the people, who include the modern Kshatriyas or wielders of political power (i.e. the politicians, the bureaucracy, and the army, etc., who constitute the state), the modern Vaishyas or wielders of economic power (i.e. the industrialists, merchants, etc., who constitute the commercial corporation), and the modern Brahmins (i.e. the learned people or the intelligentsia, who constitute the university system). The rest of the population, which is 70-80 per cent of the total, leads a sub-human existence, is purely marginalized, and is bereft of all political, economic or knowledge power, and is deprived of education and of all other good things of life.

The two main forces of modernization, education and science technology, have allied themselves with the elite and helped them to improve their standards of living but have not done (or were not allowed to do) a corresponding service to the masses of people. The elite themselves had a brief honeymoon with the people in the pre-independence period to present a united front against the British and to drive them out. Once this goal was achieved, they returned to their original position of a ruling and exploiting group, notwithstanding the many populist slogans they had learnt in the meanwhile to mouth. In fact, this new society of a modernized elite ruling over a still traditional people is far worse than that of the past when both the elite and people were traditional, when neither of them had any access to modern science, when the gap between their standards of living was not so wide nor felt so keenly, and when the elite did not have access to all the modern means of tyranny and suppression.

(2) The second grave weakness of our society, which practically follows from this elitist character, is its hierarchical organization. It would be wrong to assume that society is divided only into two groups - the elite and the masses. Actually, it is a highly fragmented society in which there are thousands of small groups (a situation which often gives it an appearance of a society which consists almost exclusively of minorities), each of which is trying to relate itself to others, not in a horizontal relationship, but in a hierarchical order on the basis of some real or imagined advantage. Even the lowest social group - the scheduled castes - is far from homogeneous it is divided into several sub-groups, all hierarchically arranged so that even the attempt to help the scheduled castes often ends in helping only those who are the most powerful among the scheduled castes. This hierarchical tradition which has gone deep in our blood is inimical to the values of democracy and social justice and is one of the major obstacles to progress.

(3) The third major weakness of our present social order is poverty which has few parallels in the world. The majority of our people live below the poverty line, and a substantial proportion of them lead an almost sub-human existence. It is this colossal and degrading poverty that is at the root of most of the evils we see around us : low standards of nutrition, bad housing conditions, and inability to benefit from social services like education or health. This is not merely a question of more production, though it is necessary and is made more difficult by growth of population. It is also a problem of the nature of production, as well as of equitable distribution.

There are two other areas where recent trends give us cause for concern. We have rightly adopted the principle of secularism in organizing our public life. The Hindu tradition of tolerance and respect for other religions is a definite asset, and in the last 150 years, we have made considerable progress to develop a secular society and polity. But the recent upsurge of revivalist communal forces, both in the Islamic and the Hindu world, do not portend well. They can only generate tensions and conflicts and spell great danger to national stability and progress. The second is the rise of authoritarian trends which forbode ill to the delicate plan of democracy we have been nurturing and must continue to foster. Both these developments are recent and have begun to loom large on the horizon after the report of the Education Commission. There is no doubt that they will have to be very carefully watched in the days ahead.

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Assuming that we are agreed on this analysis, what is the programme of development that we should undertake ? Here a preliminary observation is necessary. The current debate on the subject of development in India is divided over two models : the capitalist model, which we have actually adopted and which has the largest support, and the socialist model, to which we pay lip service and which is advocated only by a minority. One can have one's preferences between the two. We, on our part, do not believe that the capitalist model will meet our needs and, between the two, would certainly prefer the socialist model, but many will not share this view and maybe for equally good reasons. The point we would like to highlight in this context is that there can be a third model. The consumerist society that the Western nations have created, some through

capitalism and others through socialism, has led to grave crises of environmental degradation, depletion of scarce and non-renewable resources, intense social and political tensions between and within nations, and stock-piling of nuclear weapons which pose a threat to the very existence of man. Under these circumstances, it would be perfectly in order to turn away from both these models and seek a third model where sheer consumerism will not be equated with the quality of life and where a new appropriate technology will be developed in keeping with our resource endowment (including population) and our needs, without detriment to our environment. The discovery of this third model is a universal need. It is also a great possibility in India, and the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi can make a material contribution to it. It is in our best national interests to concentrate on the evolution of this third model.

To combat the elitist trends, whereby a smaller and smaller number of people come to decide the vital issues affecting the lives of larger and larger numbers of people, we need, first and foremost, the adoption of a new philosophy : faith in the common man. We must believe in his dignity, in his basic wisdom, and in his inherent capacity to manage himself. We must also be prepared to organize society on the basic principles of individual dignity and autonomy, adjustments being made therein only when another person's equal right to autonomy and dignity is affected. In other words, we must accept the need to transfer effective power from the elite to the masses. Here power means all three forms of power : political, economic and knowledge - which are obviously interrelated. It should also be clearly understood that this implies a revolt against the growth of extreme professionalism in modern society, which results in a great restriction of individual freedom. In other words, we must equate the development of our country with the development of our suppressed masses and accept the view that the prerequisite for this development is the people's awareness of themselves and of the social reality around them. This requires a rekindling of their faith in themselves and helping them to organize themselves to solve their problems. This new approach will liberate the oppressed masses and also elevate the elite by freeing them from the dehumanizing role of an oppressor in which they have trapped themselves. It is obvious that this readjustment of the present relations between the elite and the masses will not be smooth or easy. It may even become violent, if the elite do not see the writing on the wall or take their own enlightened self-interest into consideration. A change of heart on the part of the elite is necessary, but it cannot be a prime mover. Nor can it be successful in the absence of counter-pressures. Perhaps what is needed is a simultaneous effort for a change of heart among the elite and for organizing and strengthening the masses, with the state coming to the aid of the people where necessary.

The problems of inequality and poverty will have to be tackled together. A number of steps will be needed here. Perhaps the most fundamental are a rectification of the extremely skewed pattern of ownership in property and income : without this and without some drastic restraint on the wealth, income and consumption of the top 30 per cent of the population (which we have been unable to do), nothing worthwhile will be achieved. Equally important is the discovery and use of an appropriate technology which will be suited to the size of our population, to our resource endowment, and to the pressing problems of mounting pollution. Thirdly, we should concentrate on the production of commodities which the common man needs, rather than on the luxury goods required by the elite, and make these available everywhere at reasonable prices, if necessary, through a public distribution system. Lastly, we should ensure a minimum individual income through guaranteed employment at a wage which will enable a person to meet all his essential needs. It is only in this way that effective economic power will be transferred to the people. On this foundation, it will be easy to transfer political power by building organizations of the people to enable them to make effective use of their franchise, and to transfer knowledge power through programmes of universal elementary and adult education.

The third major programme will be that of social and national integration. This was a serious concern when the Education Commission wrote its report. It still continues to be so; if anything, recent developments have made it even more serious. The fragmentation of political life and the non-existence of any party which can command loyalties on a nationwide basis poses a danger to the delicate process of nation-building, which is well underway but far from complete. Reference has already been made to the growth of authoritarian trends and communal revivalism. Regional rivalries and linguistic empire-building are also adding fuel to the fire. Social and national integration does not merely imply a negative action to counteract these evils. It also means the positive and the more difficult task of changing attitudes, teaching different groups to retain their identity and yet to live together in a society with shared common goals and programmes, and creating in every citizen, irrespective of caste, race, or religion, the sense of common Indian identity to which he will be loyal and for which he will be prepared to sacrifice. There is no doubt that in the years ahead a very major political concern will be to promote social and national integration and to deal firmly with all the forces that tend to subvert it.

It is of course granted that neither this vision of the future society nor the programme to create it will be shared by all. It should not be, and it is to be expected that there would be other visions of the future society we should have and of the means of creating it. What one regrets most is that there is not enough of a national debate on the subject. One of our first concerns should be to revive this debate among all concerned : the academics, the politicians, the teachers, the students and the general public. As this debate proceeds, the problems involved will be clearer, and what is even more important, the number of those who are committed to the radical socio-economic transformation we need will also grow. This will help us greatly in the task of bringing about the socio-economic transformation itself.

The national system of education : A revised blue-print

Quite obviously, every vision of a future society and the means of creating it will necessarily imply a vision of the national system of education which this future society will need. Education and society are like two sides of a coin : one leads to the other and cannot exist without it. It is obviously not possible, nor is it necessary, to discuss all the different models of the future society we can imagine and their educational implications. Our purpose will be served if we discuss, as an illustration, some educational implications of the model of the future society we have outlined above. While doing so, we shall also indicate where the proposals made by the Education Commission need modification or examination and why. Two preliminary words of caution would be in order here. Firstly, it should be noted that the ideas of the national system of education evolved between 1906, when the Indian National Congress adopted its Resolution on national education, and 1966, when the Education Commission submitted its report, were conceived in very different social, economic and political contexts. These ideas will not necessarily apply to the future where the problems we must tackle would be very different. For instance, the dominating concept between 1906 and 1947 has been that of winning political freedom; between 1947 and 1978, we were obsessed with bridging the gap between our elite and the international elite. In the future, we will be most concerned with creating a non-elitist, people-controlled and people-oriented egalitarian society based on the values adumbrated in the preamble to the constitution and free from poverty, ignorance, ill health and at least all the grosser forms of exploitation. We must be prepared to give up or modify ideas that have outlived their utility. We must also be willing to adopt new ideas that have become relevant due to sheer impact of social changes or the new social context in which education will have to be reconstructed. Secondly, it is also necessary to guard against the common tendency to adopt some Western model, or some preferred combination of such models. While the study of all available models is essential, one's final choice in so important a matter need not be restricted to borrowed models only. This is all the more necessary because it is not easy to transplant social institutions and because we are also thinking of creating our own model of a non-consumerist society, which implies the creation of our own model of education, as well. A Swadeshi spirit is necessary in all reconstruction and the more so in education.

(1) A new educational structure

Perhaps one of the most significant contributions of the Education Commission was to suggest a radical modification of the existing educational structure (not in the arithmetical sense of $10 + 2 + 3$), with its single-point entry in class I at about the age of six, its sequential annual promotions, its insistence on full-time attendance, its almost exclusive dependence on full-time professional teachers, and its emphasis on teaching rather than learning. The Commission was also highly critical of the existing trends in favour of centralization and uniformity and of the dominance of external examinations which also made the system rigid and static and deprived schools and teachers of their autonomy and freedom. Nor was the Commission happy with the atmosphere of listlessness that generally prevails in the system, its minimal use of even the existing facilities (which is almost a crime in a poor country like ours), the lack of integration between different stages, and the utter isolation and atomization of individual institutions. The image of the national system of education which the Commission projected was therefore extremely forward-looking. According to the Commission, the national system of education :

- should not divide life into two water-tight compartments of full-time education followed by full-time work, but should make it possible for all individuals to combine work and education throughout life;
- should not divide individuals into two rigid categories of educated people, who do not work with their hands, and workers, who do not receive any formal education, but should make all individuals educated persons and productive workers;
- should emphasize learning rather than teaching;
- should not be exclusively dependent on full-time and formal education, but should develop on a large scale non-formal education, so that all the three channels of full-time, part-time and own-time education will have equal status;
- should not be exclusively dependent on full-time teachers, but should use all the teaching resources available in the community;
- should be decentralized, diversified, elastic and dynamic and should provide large scope for experimentation and innovation by schools and teachers;
- should provide a period of part-time education and part-time work between full-time education and full-time work, to make the transition smooth; and in addition, should also provide a programme of recurrent and continuing education so that every individual shall have all the opportunities for life-long learning through a channel of his choice, returning to the formal system or leaving it according to his needs;
- should provide close linkages between different stages and between all educational institutions in a given locality so that it functions as an integrated system;
- should use as intensively as possible all the existing facilities and resources so that a climate of sustained hard work is created and maintained; and
- should create communities of dedicated students and teachers engaged in a joint pursuit of truth and excellence.

The value of this contribution is now being increasingly recognized. In the years ahead, we have to carry these ideas to all concerned and evolve and implement concrete programmes based on these unexceptionable principles.

It must also be noted that the Commission did not emphasize some important aspects of the school system which have to be highlighted to transform the existing educational structure to suit future needs. For instance, the existing school system was created in the early nineteenth century on the basis of a philosophy of liberalism

and individual competition which then prevailed. These values still continue to dominate the system, and the question is whether they are adequate or even appropriate for our future needs. It is true that one of the objectives of the educational system is to function as the social institution for the pursuit of knowledge, but it also functions as the social mechanism for grading and certification of achievement, eventually for selection for admission into different social strata. This raises two basic issues : (a) how far are these functions compatible with one another ? and (b) would it be better to separate them and assign each to a different institution ? The present educational structure, borrowed from the U.K., has all the characteristics of industrial production suited for the 'knowledge industry'. How healthy are these characteristics, and what modifications do they need ? There is a 'hidden' curriculum in our educational system as in all others. For instance, in a very subtle fashion, our curricula project the values of consumerism, capitalism, and competition. How appropriate are these for the new society we desire to create ? Many other issues of this type can also be raised. One of the major tasks of the years ahead is to study these problems intensively and to develop further the concepts evolved by the Education Commission to create a new educational structure in keeping with our needs and aspirations and the future society we wish to create.

(2) Education of the people

If the creation of a people-controlled and people-oriented society is our social objective, our educational policies must give the highest priority to the education of the people. In fact, we should go further and create an educational system which may be described as education of the people, for the people and by the people. It is only such an educational system that will suit the democratic society we wish to create. The creation of such a system has been our professed objective, but in our heart of hearts, we really desired to continue the elite-dominated society. Thus there is little wonder that we failed. In fact, given our real social objectives, it would have been a surprise if we had succeeded.

What does this goal of education for the people mean in terms of concrete educational programmes ?

(a) First and foremost, it means the liquidation of adult illiteracy and the development of a continuing programme of adult education. The basic objective of this programme should be to create an awareness among adults about themselves and about the social reality around them. It should also give them confidence in themselves and organize them successfully to solve their day-to-day problems. This is precisely what Mahatma Gandhi meant when he insisted that political education is an essential component of all adult education. The desire for literacy and for further education will follow this basic orientation to development. The Education Commission had suggested that this task should be completed by 1985-86. There is no reason why we cannot still do it by then or a little later, say, by 1990-91. No amount of money should be considered too large for the purpose, and under no circumstances should the programme be allowed to lag behind for lack of financial resources. It is obvious that money will not be the bottle-neck. The main difficulties are likely to be the lack of an adequate political will and the non-availability of dedicated and competent workers on an adequate scale. It is these that need the utmost attention.

(b) Side by side, more intensive efforts are needed to provide universal elementary education to all children, at least in the age-group of 6-14. Even this task is stupendous, and as was shown earlier, the present indications are that we shall not be able to reach the goal even by the end of the Seventh Plan, i.e. by 1987-88. Steps are therefore needed to speed up the programme and to complete it earlier if possible, and under no circumstances should the programme be allowed to go beyond 1990-91. It must also be noted that this target of universal education up to 14 years of age is now fully dated and that most developed countries provide not only elementary education, but even secondary education, on a free, universal and compulsory basis. Mahatma Gandhi had advocated only seven years basic education for all (age-group 7-14). As a good deal of time was spent in learning English and as he was opposed to the teaching of English at this stage, he felt that it would be

possible even within this period of seven years to give an education equal in content to that of the matriculation examination (held at the end of class ten) minus English plus a craft. This can only mean that Mahatma Gandhi really wanted a ten-year school to be made universal and compulsory. This is what the Education Commission also recommended as the long-term objective. It would be in the fitness of things if we make this the target to be reached by 2000 A.D.

(c) Some thought has to be given to the content of elementary education (up to the end of class VIII) which is our object to universalize. The suggestion of the Commission on this subject that it should be undifferentiated, general education emphasizing language and communication skills, science and mathematics, work experience and social service, humanities and social sciences, physical education and the fine arts, are still valid and will be more so as time passes. Its main objectives should be three : (1) to introduce the child to the best elements of the accumulated culture of all peoples, including that of his own country; (2) to stimulate curiosity and a desire to learn; and (3) to give the child a capacity to learn further by himself. This last objective, which generally does not receive the attention it deserves, is extremely important. It implies that a person who has received such elementary education would be able to receive all post-elementary education he needs or desires on his own through non-formal channels. If these programmes of non-formal education are properly developed and if the formal system itself becomes more elastic and permits multiple-entry, as emphasized by the Education Commission, so that any young person or adult may enter it whenever he likes and according to his needs, an educational system which provides opportunities of life-long learning to all would have been created.

(d) There is one more important aspect which is often ignored. In the past, modernization was equated with a knowledge of the English language and with secondary and university education. This is why only those social groups which knew English and received secondary and higher education were modernized and why modernization was confined to the elite only. We are not using the expression 'modernization' as equivalent to 'westernization', although what happened to most people of the category described here is that they were only westernized without being modernized and that, very often, they only combined the worst features of both the East and West. Even using the term modernization in its proper sense (e.g. of a person who retains the best of his own culture and combines it with the best he adopts from others and has a secular, rational and scientific temper and a commitment to the values adumbrated in the preamble to the Constitution), there is no reason why the process of modernization should be restricted to those who have received secondary and higher education and know English. In fact, all education should help to modernize. The process should be an integral part of adult education and of elementary education. It should be continued at the post-elementary levels through all programmes of non-formal education so that it reaches all that vast sector of society which will still be outside the formal system of education at the secondary and university levels even in the year 2000. This is the only way in which we can modernize the people and thereby modernize society as a whole.

(e) Since the objective of social policy is to bridge the gap between the elite and the people, there is no longer any justification for segregating the children of the elite from the children of the people as we now do. A major reform to be implemented is the adoption of the common school system, with the neighbourhood school concept being universally adopted for the age-group 6-14. All the children of this country must study in neighbourhood schools (which should all maintain fairly comparable standards) and rub shoulders with each other, irrespective of their social and economic status, religion, caste, or race. There is no question of admissions on merit at this stage - these will come in the post-secondary and higher education. Similarly, there would be no longer any justification to maintain the "public" or special schools.

(f) If the programme of non-formal education is to be developed in a big way, it will not be possible to rely exclusively on full-time professional teachers as the formal education system does. It will be necessary to utilize the community resources available for educational purposes and to use fully the services of non-professional, part-time teachers to teach what they know best. In other words, the local communities will not only be planning and administering education, they will also be actively participating in it. In fact, the non-professional participants in the programme will soon far outnumber the professional teachers. The system will thus justify the appellation, education of the people, for the people and by the people.

(g) Participation in post-elementary education : The above proposals do not imply that the people are to receive only elementary education (up to class VIII or even class X) nor that they will only be entitled to non-formal post-elementary education at the secondary and university levels. This is not correct, and it is essential to emphasize that the people shall have an adequate share of full-time, secondary and higher education as well. At present, the top 30 per cent of the people occupy 70 per cent of the seats in secondary education and 80 per cent of the seats in higher education. This skewed composition of the student body must be changed : the people should get at least 50 per cent of the seats at these levels. How can this be done ?

(i) Of course, this assumes that we shall universalize elementary education on a priority basis. If that is not done and elementary education continues to be completed only by 25 to 30 per cent of the children, all talk of replanning the composition of the post-elementary student body is futile.

(ii) We shall further assume that we shall implement fully the recommendation of the Commission that there shall be a nation-wide programme for discovery and development of talent and that the top 5 to 15 per cent of the students at every stage shall be enabled, through scholarships and placement to continue their education in good schools at the next stage. Let us assume that about 10 per cent of the seats will be taken up by this talented group. We will further assume that the selection procedures will be improved and based on merit and social justice so that at least half of these students will be from among the people.

(iii) The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are entitled to 21 per cent of the available seats on the basis of their population, but they actually avail themselves of only 5 per cent of the seats. While reservation on the population basis should continue for them, let us assume that by 2000 A.D., they will occupy at least 15 per cent of the seats available.

(iv) There are three other aspirant and deserving groups to be considered : all children of poor parents (other than scheduled castes and tribes); all first generation learners, irrespective of social class and status; and all girls, also irrespective of social class and status. These groups have no assured financial support and no reservations. They occupy about 30-40 per cent of the seats (the girls coming mostly from the privileged classes). It is proposed that we may reserve this category for all children of the poor people (other than scheduled castes and scheduled tribes) only, with special encouragement for girls and first generation learners. This group should be given some assured financial support and about 40 per cent of the seats should be reserved for them.

(v) The privileged classes would thus get the remaining 35 per cent of the seats (which is out of proportion to their number) and the reserved but unutilized seats.

One need not insist on the precise figures used. They should be taken only as indicative of the direction in which we should move. If results along these lines are to be obtained, it is necessary to emphasize two programmes. Firstly, we should provide liberal financial support to talented but economically handicapped children who do not belong to the scheduled castes or scheduled tribes. This problem has been neglected too long, and it is undoubtedly one of the most important issues we shall have to tackle in the days ahead. By 2000 A.D. we should be able to base all our

programme of scholarships on economic considerations alone and delink it from birth or caste. Secondly, we will have to adopt the system of selective admissions, along with reservation as indicated above and with the use of improved methods of selection that will combine merit with social justice. An open door policy would continue to support the privileged, as it has always done in the past, and will have to be abandoned.

It will be seen that the Education Commission has made several valuable contributions to the development of these programmes. This is another area where the recommendations of the Commission are valid and will continue to be relevant even in the days ahead.

(3) Secondary education

Secondary education has a crucial significance in the life of the individual because it is almost co-extensive with the difficult period of adolescence. It has also a significant role in the educational ladder because it provides teachers for elementary education and students for higher education. From the point of view of the needs of a modern society, it is secondary, not elementary, education that is of crucial significance. That is why all the developed countries have provided universal secondary education and why the Education Commission also recommended that in the long run, we should make the ten-year school universal. In spite of all this significance, however, secondary education in India has always remained the weakest link in the educational ladder. It has also continued to be comparatively neglected because it has lacked the prestige of higher education, on the one hand, and the popular appeal of elementary education, on the other. What is even worse, it has not been studied adequately, and its problems have attracted but little attention.

Some of its basic problems are historical in origin. The early secondary schools established in the early years of the nineteenth century were modelled after the grammar schools of England and provided only the academic stream, which led through the matriculation to the university. This early model still continues to dominate the scene, and even today 90 per cent of the secondary schools fall in this category. Diversification was recognized as the most needed reform nearly 90 years ago, but all attempts to diversify it have yielded only meagre results. Vocationalization was also recognized as a major reform equally early, but the attempts to introduce vocational courses and make secondary education terminal for a majority of its students have only had a very limited success. Its relevance has been questioned for a very long time. Even as late as 1902, its main object was described as teaching the English language. That has now ceased to dominate the scene, and rightly so, but we have not yet been able to define new objectives for secondary education. It is said that secondary education fits a student for entry into a college and unfits him for almost everything else. This only shows how difficult, complex and intractable have been the problems of secondary education. It is because these are not solved that they may rise on the educational ladder and become the still more difficult, more complex and more intractable problems of higher education.

One more point needs to be added. At present the size of the problems of secondary education is comparatively small because only 25 per cent of the students complete elementary education, so lower secondary education is availed of only by about 20 per cent of the age-group and upper secondary education only by about 8 per cent of the age-group. When elementary education becomes universal, say, by 1990-91, the proportion of students going up will increase, and by 2000 A.D., full-time, lower secondary education may have to be provided to about 50 per cent of the age-group (14-16) and full-time upper secondary education to about 20 per cent of the age-group (17-18). Moreover, part-time, non-formal secondary education will have to be provided to a substantial proportion of those who leave the school at the end of the elementary and lower secondary stages and enter the world of work. When the scope and size of the system of secondary education is so enlarged, its difficulty and complexity will increase in proportion. Therefore, there is no doubt that the proper planning and

development of secondary education will present one of the stiffest challenges to the educational planners of tomorrow.

The contribution of the Education Commission to the solution of the problems of secondary education are partially useful, but are neither adequate nor free from controversy.

It would be sufficient to sum up by saying that the main problems we have been facing in secondary education are : How do we reconcile its two objectives of preparing students for the university and also providing them with terminal courses of a practical, vocational type ? How do we introduce diversity to suit all talents without creating water-tight and irrevocable streams ? How do we make secondary education relevant, especially to those who do not proceed to the university ? How do we improve standards ? How do we solve the complex organizational problems, especially in the smaller schools, which will be the norm in rural areas ? It is the failure to solve these problems that has made secondary education the weakest link in the chain. Even the Education Commission has not given enough guidance to solve these problems whose complexity and difficulty will increase in the days ahead with growth of the system, and this is therefore an area in which a good deal of fresh thinking, research and experimentation is called for

(4) Higher education

On the whole, one is left with the feeling that in tackling the basic issues of higher education in the days ahead, in making it relevant or linking it closely with national development and raising its standards, the proposals of the Education Commission provide only a partial answer. This is also an area where a good deal of fresh thinking, research and experimentation is called for. Among the major issues that will have to be tackled in higher education in the years ahead, the following may be mentioned :

(a) The programme of using regional languages as media of instruction has to be developed further, with all the ancillary reforms needed to maintain standards.

(b) Continued efforts will have to be made to introduce improved selection procedures that combine merit and social justice.

(c) Programmes have to be decided to ensure that all university teachers and students do effectively participate in meaningful and challenging proposals of national and social service. The present National Social Service Scheme is only a poor answer to this need, and a bolder attempt is called for.

(d) A much greater expansion is needed in the development of non-formal programmes of part-time and full-time education. The target suggested by the Commission in this regard, that about one-third of the total enrolment in higher education should be in these courses by 1986 (Para 12.22), is still far from realized.

(e) There is no justification for the continuance of the 'dual' system which we operate in higher education, viz, there is a core of high quality and prestigious institutions, which are availed of mostly by the privileged classes, surrounded by a large penumbra of institutions which maintain poor standards and in which we offer 'open door' access to the under-privileged groups and provide them a seat in some institution, however poor, and in some course, however useless. The Education Commission diagnosed a similar malady at the school levels and suggested the concepts of the neighbourhood school and the common school system. These cannot be extended to the university level, but some other measures will have to be adopted to see that this dual system does come to an end.

(f) In the present model of higher education, the two functions of (i) producing, conserving and diffusing knowledge and (ii) grading and certifying, mainly for purposes of employment, are combined. We also found that this combination creates several problems, so is it really essential ? If it is not, how can we separate and organize the grading and certifying function independently of the universities ? This is really the problem of delinking jobs from degrees that is now widely and rather loosely being talked of. However, if the combination of these two functions is inevitable, how do we solve the problems arising therefrom ?

(g) The problem of raising standards in higher education still continues to baffle us. That a concentration of resources is necessary for improving standards is readily granted, but how much concentration and where is still an unanswered question, nor have we been able to strike a proper balance between policies of concentration and dispersal. We still know very little about why institutions rise to heights and then decline. Above all, we are not able to add substantially to the competent and dedicated leadership available in the university system and are not even able to make the best use of whatever talent is actually available. In fact, the whole question of proper management of the educational system from the point of view of improving standards is wide open, and this is one area on which we shall have to concentrate in the years ahead.

(h) There is a first-rate crisis of routine management in the universities which are not even able to do essential jobs, like holding examinations on time, due to which the basic educational process itself comes to a grinding halt all too frequently. Modernization and improvement of university administration is one of the major challenges of the future, and here also, there is immense scope for fresh thinking and experimentation.

(i) The problem of students will become still more pressing as time passes, particularly the problems of students from the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other weaker sections, who will come to the universities with several handicaps and who will need a good deal of remedial teaching. The students of the system of higher education have long ceased to be an homogeneous body, and we will have to learn to divide them into separate groups and to deal with each group in accordance with its needs and potential. Student services are weak and the extent of student aid is limited at present. These will have to be strengthened and expanded, and the challenging programme of associating students with the government of institutions of higher education will have to be developed further.

It is hardly necessary to illustrate the point in greater detail. What has been said already is enough to show that the proper development of higher education is one of the major tasks which faces us in the creation of a national system of education. In this area, as well as in the development of secondary education, we shall have to go far beyond the lead provided by the Education Commission.

(5) Administration and finance

In so far as management of education is concerned, the most valuable contribution of the Education Commission is the suggestion that all school education should be decentralized to the district level and entrusted to specially constituted District and Municipal School Boards, with adequate provision for delegation of authority to the local community. Another good contribution of the Commission is the idea of evolving an integrated system wherein different stages will work together, and education institutions will not be isolated or atomized.

Regarding leadership of institutions and processes of educational administration at the Central and State levels, the Commission has no major contribution to make because it depended too much on the creation of the Indian Education Service, which is no longer a practicable proposition. We will therefore have to design good models of educational administration at all levels in which the universities, schools, teachers, students and parents, will be able to take part and which will be based on the principles of decentralization, diversification, elasticity and dynamism. This is again virgin soil with almost infinite scope for fresh thinking and experimentation.

In respect to educational finance, the Education Commission recommended that six per cent of the national income should be devoted to education by 1985-86. This recommendation was accepted by the Government and included in the National Policy on Education (1968). However, on the basis of the experience of the last 12 years, it seems desirable to highlight the following issues in the years to come :

(a) As we go from plan to plan, the committed (recurrent) expenditure on education increases rapidly. Therefore, the plan expenditure necessarily becomes proportionately smaller. In other words, we get into a situation where the educational tasks to be attempted increase from plan to plan while the plan allocations continue to decrease. If we were to depend upon plan allocations alone to bring about educational development (this is what we have generally done in the past), the task appears almost hopeless. Ways and means to utilize all education expenditure, both plan and non-plan, must therefore be found. This will make our task easier because total educational expenditure does increase from plan to plan.

(b) The levels of educational expenditure already reached are very high, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find additional funds for education in an over-all situation of scarcity and in the face of severe competition from other sectors. It is obvious that we can never have all the resources we need for a good nation system of education. Therefore, it becomes imperative to reduce unit costs, to explore all possible methods of economy, to use facilities intensively, and to bring down the total cost of the national system of education within practical financial limits. Wasteful and ineffective expenditure is the order of the day in every sector and at every stage of education. This is a luxury which we could never afford. At any rate, we cannot afford it any longer. It is easy to argue that a poor country cannot have good and sufficient education. The challenge is to develop an approach which will enable even a poor country to have a national system of education of adequate coverage and quality.

(c) While money is needed, no amount of money can solve every educational problem, and money alone can never secure proper educational development. This will be even more true in the years ahead. It is necessary to emphasize the non-monetary inputs in educational development (e.g. better planning, sustained hard work, dedicated efforts of teachers, students and educational administrators, etc.) which are of far greater significance than mere investment of additional monetary resources.

Implementation

In the preceding sections, we discussed two main tasks before us, viz. (1) to visualize the future society and (2) to prepare a blue-print of a national system of education suited to it. We shall now turn to the discussion of a third important task before us, viz. how to implement the proposals of educational reform that we may formulate in order to create the national system of education. One need not underestimate the significance of the first two tasks, which are largely academic in character. But obviously, an over-riding significance attaches itself to the third which is action-oriented, especially as our largest failure has been not so much in the generation of knowledge, as in its application to social situations. When the Education Commission met Dr. Zakir Husain and sought his advice about its report, he emphasized this aspect of the problem : "Just say three words : implement, implement and implement. *

From the narrative in the preceding chapters, it has become obvious that the recommendations of the Education Commission were not implemented properly. This was due in many cases to factors inherent in the individual recommendations, but this poor implementation was also due, in a way, to the absence of a general atmosphere or infrastructure conducive to the implementation of reforms. It is this general atmosphere and the "change-agents" visualized by the Commission which we shall now discuss in this concluding section.

* Dr. Zakir Husain was President of India at the time.